NAVIGATE

Issue #4

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Message from the JC2 GP Team

Dear Eunoians,

> "Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on." — Louis L'Amour

This issue of Navigate is a collection of responses to the JC2's Term 1 Paper 1 Timed assignment and Paper 2 March Common Test AQs. As you are almost three quarters into your GP journey here in Eunoia, you may be starting to sense that at long last, you do understand what the subject demands of you, and how you should be addressing the essay questions!

This is where you are possibly wondering how to take things further - how do I provide deeper evaluation? (Hint: try to get familiar with the UCs.) How do I write with original insight? How do I give a clear sense of my own personal voice?

While there is certainly no formula available for those questions, these noteworthy pieces of writing from some of your peers may give you an indication of what these seemingly elusive attributes may look like. As always, although these pieces are commendable in many aspects, they cannot be plans for your own writing, for that must come from you.

Ultimately, as the quote above suggests, attributes like insight, depth of evaluation and a strong personal voice are not developed through once-a-term writing assignments. Good writing takes time, practice, and a constant honing of your thoughts and arguments over and over again.

Perhaps, it is only fitting to end the way we began: start writing!

All the best,
Your GP Teachers ❤

Essays and Paragraphs

Paper 1 Timed Assignment in response to 2016 VJC Preliminary Examinations Paper 1:

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8   'The value of sports is overrated.' Is this true today?
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9   Are ethical practices the key to a successful business?
   - Ngai Win Lynn, 18-U4 (Full essay)

10   'Clothes make a man.' Do you agree with this view?
   - Cham Jay Yin, 18-U4 (Full essay)

11   Is the library redundant in today's world?
   - Breanna Tan, 18-O3 (Excerpt)
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12   Is it fair to say that the arts do nothing to solve the problems of your society?
   - Sarah Mak, 18-O3 (Full essay)

1   How far should the government be involved in the private lives of its people?

This essay demonstrates clear awareness of the issues regarding state intervention, with a good use of concepts such as freedom and its implications. However, the counter argument was not fully developed, and balance throughout the rest of the essay was not present as the conditions of the question (i.e. "how far should…") were not taken into consideration. A wide range of interesting examples were used, although not all were evaluated completely. While the overall scope of the essay may have been quite limited, depth in understanding was evident wherever evaluation was made. The essay also highlights the importance of time management in order to ensure completion of the essay and allow for room to develop each point adequately.

Benjamin Franklin is believed to have said something to the effect of people who sacrifice liberty in exchange for security will have neither. This quote succinctly highlights the fundamental tension which exists between the government[] duty to safeguard the liberty and safety of its citizens. Many believe that safety and freedom [are] mutually exclusive, that ensuring the security of citizens ultimately entail[s] the invasion of [] private lives in order to police behaviours deemed dangerous and to root out potential threats [or] criminals. [I] agree that while the mutual exclusivity of safety and security is true in some regard, these concepts can be reconciled and governments do own their citizens a moral duty, which justifies their involvement in the private lives of citizens in some aspects.

> Vague start to the essay, explanation could have been clearer as well
>
> Contention is stated clearly

Governments owe a moral duty to their citizens which thus justifies their involvement in the lives of citizens when issues of national security are concerned. Governments in principle derive their legitimacy from the will of the people and the expectation that it will do its best to safeguard the nation's interests, the most paramount of which is security. One must also recognise that the nature of [a] government is fundamentally coercive – they maintain a monopoly on force and violence through the military and police, they [pay] the wages of their people, they alone have the authority to decide whether to curtail your rights or not. In order for this state of affairs to be justified, citizens must also hold a degree of control over the government, more often than not through the ballot box. Thus, through this transaction of rights and freedom between the state and its people, one realises that a moral duty is owed by the state to its citizens. Fulfilling this moral duty usually entails the protection of the fundamental human dignity of people, enriched in principles of the right to safety and the right to freedom. However, given that these [two] principles are often in tension, I would argue that it is more valuable for the government to uphold security rather than freedom. Firstly, [] the protection of security is what enables freedom. A citizen is only truly free if he is able to meaningful[ly] actualise his desires without the intervention of external agents. In failed states like Somalia[,] while citizens are technically able to go about their own private lives without government intervention, the constant threat and fear of violence from armed militia means that in reality, their freedom is highly restricted. Whereas in most developed nations with the rule of law and the means to enforce law, while their citizens are indeed limited in their lives by government regulation, this regulation is in turn crucial for the stability and safety of society, which enables citizens to go about their lives without the fear of being attacked in the streets. A key example of this is in Singapore, where the government maintains the right to put people under detention without trial with the Internal Security Act (ISA). Many activists and international human rights organisations deplore and criticise this over the lack of 'freedom'. But many have failed to understand that it was through the ISA that many threats which sought to subvert national security such as communists in the 1950s

> Clear topic sentence
>
> Could elaborate further on how the government holds this sort of power
>
> Explains why governments have a moral duty to interfere, but more detail can be provided about the circumstances in which the exercise of this duty is justified is necessary
>
> Link between the argument for providing security and the involvement in the private lives of people is not well developed

to 60s and more recently, terror suspects were able to be apprehended. It was only with the suppression of these dangers through restrictive legislation like the ISA that Singaporeans ironically can feel free and at ease and go about their day without fear.	
Some critics maintain that governments have no business interfering in the lives of their citizens, and if people have radically different conceptions of what is in their interest, what place does the government have to make moral judgements on their life choices? They argue that since values and meaning in life are pure human constructs, then no conception of these values should be prioritised over the rest, that all of these ideas are equally valid and [the] choices citizens make in their private lives that follow from their ideals by extension should be valid too, and thus the government should not be able to involve themselves in these decisions.	This paragraph can be better developed as a counter argument with the addition of illustration and links
However, the argument is highly problematic due to a few reasons. Firstly, their claim is premised on the assumption that all conceptions of life and the choices that follow [] are equally legitimate. I argue that this is not the case, that there is indeed a hierarchy of value, that some conceptions of what life ought to be [are] better than others, because some ideals are more destructive than others. Someone who subscribes to a Nazi ideology does not have [the same] conception of life compared to someone who subscribes to a more moderate position. Secondly, they assume that [the] government bears [the] responsibility [of] satisfying their citizens. Governments have to weigh and balance out the people's interests of all their citizens, to the point [at] which some people's choices result[] in the infringement of others' interests, as is the case with smoking in public, it is then justified for the government to clamp down and stop citizens from making certain choices, such as banning smoking in public areas. Additionally, if the choices of some people infringe on the other priorities of the government, it is then necessary to interfere. For example, the government has the responsibility of protecting the environment, and if someone is caught polluting, [] the state would sue and imprison him.	Good identification of the assumption Demonstrates a clear link back to the question - *should* the government be involved and *why*? However, addressing the element of *how far should*, would allow for a more nuanced argument Reasons provided here are unclear
In conclusion[,] government should be able to impose on citizens' freedom and involve itself in people's private lives. *(Owen Phua, 18-A4)*	Incomplete conclusion

2   Is science and technology advancing too quickly for the good of mankind?

This essay's strength is in its clarity and commitment to its thesis statement - with the student constantly referring to it in both supporting and opposing arguments, the essay is at once both comprehensive and possessed of a clear, nuanced stand. This can be most clearly seen in the introduction, where different stakeholders are introduced in an array of contexts, which sets the groundwork for rich content paragraphs to come. While many of the arguments are insightful and the examples wide-ranging, greater balance can be achieved by exploring why there could be merit in the opposite argument. The writing displays flair, though this is a double-edged sword when longer sentences become convoluted and compromise on clarity of expression.

A decade ago, if anyone were to suggest the idea of smartphones with unlimited access to information with a few touches or driving a driverless car, they [would have surely been] branded a lunatic. But now, what was previously considered building castles in the air is not only slowly materializing into a reality, but some have even become an indispensable part of our lives. Humanity [is] currently marching towards the golden age of science and technology with booming discoveries in different diverse areas such as automobile[s] [and] medical sciences. This can translate to better healthcare knowledge and bring conveniences to our everyday life. However, it does not come without its repercussions. While rapid advancement in science and technology can indeed benefit mankind in more than one way, it may also undermine our survival in the long run in the event that we let them control [] us. Hence, I believe science and technology is advancing too quickly for the good of mankind.	The understanding of what exactly 'too quickly' entails could be clarified in the introduction
Many may argue that science and technology is an integral driving force in today's world and that its rapid advancement will bring mankind to prosperity in a way never imagined before, boosting our material and non-material standard of living. Taking Singapore for example, our nation has initiated the 'Smart Nation' project which aims to transform Singapore into a more technologically-inclined business hub in the region. This not only brings in greater foreign direct investment and hence economic excellence but also substantially improv[es] [the] lives of the masses. Furthermore, breakthroughs in cures for diseases in the medical field also mean prolonging lives and can potentially save millions of lives worldwide. The faster the development of science and technology, the greater the benefits it brings for mankind.	Further exemplification would be beneficial to establishing that the lives of people have been improved
While I wholeheartedly agree that the usefulness of science and technology are undeniably imperative to everyone, however it also poses a question of [] whether we are able to responsibly utilize these newfound knowledge or inventions. Relating back to the example of Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, digitalisation can eradicate the cumbersome task of using pen and paper to record information and allow fuss-free access to anything we require. However, this has also put the entire nation's data at [risk] of being illegally hacked. This also means that once a hacker has acquired complete access to our system, [they] can potentially shut down our economy and destruct everyday lives. Just not too long ago, the server of all national hospitals and polyclinics were forcefully broken into, revealing confidential information of over thousands of citizens, including the prime minister's. While this may seem harmless enough and not [a big] deal, this can only be considered the beginning and a warning to the great catastrophe that may potentially ensue if we are unable to manage these technologies safely. With great power comes great responsibility[;] these technologies that are dispensable to us [are] double-edged swords that [have] to be properly controlled. Unfortunately, at this point [in] time it is evident that we cannot prevent such destruction from occurring. [Hence] I feel that science and technology [are] progressing a tad too quickly	Topic sentence captures an insightful aspect of the issue, although the development of the point is more about the ability to mitigate threats than responsible use. Greater precision is thus possible and desirable

as we are still unable to grapple [with] them completely and [they] may lead to a bigger cost than benefit for mankind.	
Furthermore, science and technology is indeed advancing too quickly for the good of mankind as in some cases, it may even go against our beliefs and values and result in conflict. One of the more contentious debates [in] the medical field is on the issue of genetic engineering. This process involves extracting the DNA of one species and plac[ing] them in another specie such that the latter can exhibit characteristics belonging to the former. This practice is already prevalent in agriculture and countries such as Taiwan and Japan where[] there [are] seedless watermelons or even pumpkins that [are] twice [their] original size. The more controversial [issue] lies in [the] genetic engineering of animals and humans. Since [our youth] we have heard of the saying that no one is perfect and we should embrace the ugliness that is inherent within us. However, genetic engineering aims to create the 'perfect' human with flawless features and utmost intelligence. This is often referred to as 'playing god' and has sparked [considerable] outrage and criticism. I, on one hand, believe that it is going against the ethic of science [to engage in] such practices. Furthermore, guinea pigs may be required to test these research which goes against human right[s] in itself. There have also been articles about parents being able to choose the features of their newborns through scientific means in the future. This notion is horrendous as a child is being objectified like any character in a role-playing game, and definitely should not be put to practice. If such research keeps up, it would not be surprising to see an article several decades later regarding longevity, which is widely regarded as a taboo. As human beings, we need to uphold our morals and treasure each life as it is. [Hence], I feel that science and technology is advancing too quickly because it has caused many to forego their primary principles and this is detrimental to mankind.	What types of values are propagated as a result of these? This argument could be taken further with a productive examination of beliefs, values and ethics surrounding science and technology This is not well expressed and could be clarified through further elaboration
Additionally, rapid advancement of science and technology has also brought about grave repercussions that can undermine our survival in the long run. This concerns the state of our environment and the detriments that [have] been incurred. More factories and research centers have to be built in order to support the rapid development of technology. This means that more trees are being cut down, leading to deforestation. The poisonous gas emitted by these factories goes into our atmosphere and results in global warming. Finite resources are also being consumed at an alarming rate leaving limited [amounts] for future generations. This spells trouble for the entire mankind because these side effects are unknowingly becoming a hindrance and can affect us gravely. Therefore at the rate that technology and science are progressing, it has resulted in more bane than boon for mankind due to its unintended consequences.	A concrete example here would strengthen the argument
In conclusion, the idea of progressing into a utopian world is seemingly becoming a reality through rapid advancement in technology. Lives can be improved and everyday routines become effortless. However, we need to be clear of the two sides to everything and weigh their costs and benefits. In this case, I believe that the unintended side effects that rapid advancement has brought about [are] undeniably detrimental and cannot be ignored. *(Heng Boon Long, 18-E5)*	Some mention of possible steps would be well-placed to conclude the examination of the threats posed by the rapid development of science and technology

4   Should countries encourage migration today?

This essay presents highly perceptive ideas in a consistently balanced discussion. It confidently engages opposing perspectives and evaluates them by unpacking the assumptions and beliefs that underlie them, resulting in a piece of writing that is sophisticated, considered, nuanced and insightful. However, the use of a writing structure can sometimes result in overly generic topic sentences, when the topic sentences of each paragraph should make clear the reasons for the argument advanced in the paragraph. The essay can be further strengthened through the use of more apt illustration and more attention paid to consistently addressing the circumstances of 'today'. In sum, it is a strong and coherent attempt at unpacking and evaluating the problems and benefits that migration brings.

The past century has been characterised by huge strides in technology, allowing for greater freedom in the movement of people across national and regional boundaries. Yet, these very tides of globalisation have more recently ushered in an era of populism in numerous developed countries around the world. From President Trump's repeated, inflammatory attacks on immigrants, to the Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban's calls for an end to Europe's relaxed immigration policy, the once-championed concept of migration is now viewed as a damaging force to countries. While it may, in this increasingly volatile and complex world, be tempting to close borders and build walls, I am of the view that migration is and will continue to be beneficial to many countries involved, and hence, should be actively promoted by states.	Clear context that shows awareness of trends and illustrates with examples Contention is raised and a stand is advanced Could unpack 'today' more clearly
The most prominent and persuasive argument against the mass movement of individuals to developed countries is one in the economic domain. Founded on the principles of protectionism, opponents to migration posit that governments in sovereign states have a duty, first and foremost, to their own citizens, just as their citizens have a primary duty to the society to which they claim to belong. They then assert that immigrants in developed countries have a net negative effect on the overall economic standing of citizens. This occurs in two ways - firstly, immigrants may, either legally or illegally, receive social safety benefits that would otherwise have been distributed more generously to citizens. Secondly, and more persistently, they assert that immigrants often drive out citizens from their industries and render numerous citizens / natives unemployed or non-competitive, as immigrants are willing to work harder and receive less in financial remuneration. They point to countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, where cheaper labour has allegedly led to higher unemployment. Finally, they call on states to protect such workers from migrants as a justification for rejecting migration in today's world.	Topic sentence and example are clear but quite generic Counter-argument is well developed, but needs more link to 'today'

Main text	Annotations
While this argument is commonly heard, it is not infallible and is tenuous in several aspects. While it must be acknowledged that states have a duty to care for their citizens, this does not necessarily translate into the tangible policies of restrictions in immigration. The proposed problems of immigrants wrongfully receiving benefits are but technicalities that justify increased oversight. High rates of tax evasion do not reduce our need to collect tax, nor do they justify us collecting a standard sum of money from everyone to close loopholes. Secondly, it must be noted that immigrants often take on low paying jobs in developed societies. The argument that the government should protect citizens from economic competition is predicated on the assumption that, in the absence of migration, it would be sustainable for such industries to continue. This assumption, while politically popular, no longer holds true in our global and modern context. As a result of the exponential development of the forces of globalisation, the vast majority of industries in most developed countries will be exposed to the ruthlessness of global competition in some shape or form. An excellent case study is the gradual decline of the once-booming auto-manufacturing industry in the Midwestern United States, in which global competitors like Japanese car manufacturers rendered sustaining production in American factories non-competitive. In light of this reality, it is important that states introduce some form of economic incentive for industries to evolve, for workers to re-skill and for companies to recalibrate their strategies and such an incentive could manifest in immigrants. While it may be politically tempting to protect workers from competition, such relief is fleeting and should not be the primary consideration of a responsible, visionary government. With close support from the state and careful management of intakes, migration can be a force of good and thus should be promoted by developed states.	This example could be made clearer through properly establishing its relevance to the argument An insightful evaluation of the opposing claim This claim has not been developed: how migrants would help needs to be pointed out. This is a crucial idea to develop for this rebuttal
Moreover, the earlier economic protests neglect the enormous contributions that immigrants can make to the economy, either through purchasing goods and services, or by paying taxes. In most export-oriented, goods-producing economies around the world, migrants add additional stimuli to markets, resulting in a cyclical boost to the free market and relevant actors. This is particularly important as headwinds of a global recession draw near - a more vibrant, fuller population sustains domestic consumption and assists economies in weathering times of increased skepticism in our volaile world. The additional contributions to state coffers that immigrants make cannot be understated. The collective amalgamation of increased revenue often results in increased surpluses for responsible state spending in areas like education, healthcare and defence, priorities which are important for all citizens. In recent times, the emergence of e-commerce and cryptocurrency allow international market players to evade the revenue authorities of states and have thus led to a decrease in contributions from traditional sources of revenue like the Goods and Services Tax. Hence, the additional contributions of immigrants are not trivial and are yet another reason as to why governments should continue to support the migration of peoples.	There is no clear thesis statement here Evidence to support this is missing This claim is very ambitious. The burden of proof would be reduced if the focus was on just the economic benefits migrants bring to a country

Beyond the economic sphere, however, several skeptics point to the social domains of society in rejecting immigration. They first posit that the identity of a society is crucial to the unity and cohesiveness of communities, and argue that members of a community have the sole right to shape and define their identity. They then argue that the mass influx of immigrants results in changes in social norms and customs, as individuals bringing their own identities as a branch of that of their own countries of origin. Under these lenses, the dilution of a culture of a society by aliens robs locals of the agency and ownership of their own culture. Similarly, this is not a new line of analysis. The assertion that immigrants threaten their society's culture is a convincing one, and such nativist rhetoric has driven elections across the globe and fuelled notable resentment. Arguably, this resentment is more significant than that over the economic issues aforementioned, as while they are often conflated, identity is an integral part of the human condition. It is thus expected that some harbour this skepticism over immigrants and therefore call for the government to reject such forces.	Topic sentence is quite generic

The problems that immigration brings are developed, but the link to 'today' should be strengthened

No concrete examples are provided |
| However, such arguments are often based on shaky premises and questionable first principles. The assertion that others' culture will 'threaten' one's identity is predicated on the assumption that cultures cannot coexist and are mutually exclusive. Upon closer examination, this reveals a deep sense of arrogance about one's culture - that it must remain exclusive, and that its exclusivity places it on a higher moral pedestal vis-a-vis the culture of others. As the central governing authority in society, the government has a duty to look past such arbitrary comparisons and consider the practical effects of their policies. It is possible for multiculturalism to succeed - Singapore is an imperfect but nonetheless reasonably successful example to examine. The multicultural nature of Singapore is manifested in our celebration of numerous traditions from a diverse array of racial groups. | The link here can be made clearer. The line of argument taken here is about the presence of ethnocentricism, while a link can also be made through the presence of universal similarities across cultures |
| In fact, Singapore's unique culture genius is what ensures its continued relevance in today's globalised world. This is linked to a broader and equally important argument. In a world where offices transcend national boundaries and industries of various nations are constantly in interaction, it is imperative that communities remain open, inclusive and culturally sensitive - and the induction of immigrants is an excellent way of achieving this. Societies around the world can no longer exist in their own bubbles, for the factors of decreasing natural resources, climate change, overpopulation and increased competition demand close collaboration between individuals from different countries across a wide range of sectors. In such a world, it would be unwise to cave in to nativist calls for 'purity' of culture - at the cost of continued relevance and sensitivity in the modern society. Hence, immigration should be promoted and not rejected by such countries, even if this results in slight changes to cultural norms. | The need to separate these two paragraphs is not apparent

Both 'today' and migration are addressed |
| Some leaders recognise the necessity of immigration but fear the political repercussions of opening borders. They often point to Germany as an example of the fate of political establishments disobeying the unprincipled but powerful forces on the fight rejecting immigration. This is a common fear of political leaders. Yet, closer examination reveals that political consequences are less than feared. For instance, in Germany, while the rise of the anti-immigration far right has worried observers, this was also accompanied by a meteoric rise in support for the Green Party, which runs on a platform of embracing immigration and promoting migration. While there will always be naysayers in society who reject changes at | The topic sentence is unclear - why it is approached from just the perspective of politicians is not made apparent

The focus on the question is weaker in this paragraph. Links should be made consistently |

all costs, there are increasingly more less vocal but significant individuals who recognise both the practical and principled dimensions behind immigration. All hope is not lost.	
This ties nicely to my final point. Beyond all the practical considerations behind migration, there is also a moral one. Developed Western societies should still promote migration even in the absence of clear and immediate economic benefits, because of the immense historical baggage that has accumulated as a result of centuries of exploitative, colonialist and imperial policies. European nations, in particular, are guilty of having robbed numerous colonies of their treasured natural resources to fuel the Industrial Revolution. In so doing, these developed countries (or their historical predecessors) are partially responsible for some of the very problems that are driving the mass movement of peoples today - structural imbalances on the economy, shaky political infrastructure and an identity riddled with colonialist sentiments. While formerly colonialist countries like Britain and Spain should continue to contribute to resolving these issues in countries of origin, there exists a moral imperative for them to open their doors to individuals who seek a better life for themselves - a better life that their ancestors never had.	Clearly addresses the moral obligation, with some implicit links made to 'today' The reasons for some of today's existing problems are uncovered and used to argue how they should be solved
Ultimately, the world that we live in has changed drastically to facilitate the free movement of individuals. Developments in technology and changes to the global economy necessitate countries to look beyond their borders,and beyond their citizens, when considering the implications of any policy. In such an era, there are two paths that countries can take - one, the road of isolation, closed borders, protectionism and fleeting security, or the other, the road of multiculturalism, inclusivity, and ultimately the progressive and sustainable path to principled prosperity. It is my hope that countries take the latter and encourage migration. *(Kenneth Hoh, 18-O5)*	An effective conclusion that considers the future implications

5   To what extent can education solve the problem of poverty?

This essay presents a thoughtful and well-argued response that showcases a good understanding of relevant issues to do with poverty. However, it largely does not acknowledge or concede what education is able to do and does not provide balance, and in failing to do so glosses over the topic of the question. This is therefore a lesson in the need to acknowledge the question's position. While the arguments made clearly evince good and relevant knowledge of the world and utilise the universal concepts to achieve a deeper understanding, concrete examples are few and so lend limited weight to the many assertions made. All these are conveyed with a strong personal voice that argues fluently and convincingly.

Dissonance between the social classes has long marked the globe [and] poverty is a persistent societal issue that has plagued humanity for centuries. In the hierarchical and patriarchal societies that preceded us, poverty and affluence were merely means to be born into, social mobility being a rare if not foreign concept. Thus, the question is posed as why is it that today, with rising levels of access to primary levels of education to those [from] all walks of life across the globe and with rising levels of global literacy levels, our societies still battle with the crisis of poverty and [ever-rising] levels of inequality and income inequality? Ultimately, we are called to question and re-evaluate if our education systems truly lead the cause for social mobility and economical uplift and the inherent inequities and prejudices within our systems that further worsen the poverty crisis, as well as the issue of overpopulation.	Context of the question is well set How education is seen as a means of escaping poverty at all can be explained here, rather than assumed. A focus on education would frame the response better to directly answer the question Stand is not clear
While education has been designed to tackle the issue of cyclical poverty, the privatisation of the education scene threatens that very function. In an ideal world, education is meant to act as a 'social ladder', aiming to provide equal opportunities and level the playing field, allowing children of low- to high-income groups to work their way to success. However, this is threatened by looming levels of privatisation within the education system that decrease accessibility to education amongst the lower-income brackets and aim to profit off the necessity and perceived value of education in society. Contemporary societal and economic systems were designed to be meritocratic in nature, affording those who work hard the success they deserve, like those with a strong education, better jobs and pay; however this, coupled with rising levels of affluence and inequality, has allowed those who can afford it to 'buy' their way to a 'better' education, with better resources and more personalised learning and teaching techniques, private institutions market themselves as a quality education and grades that you can buy, at a steep price. Moreover, beyond selling an education and qualifications, skewed job markets have allowed private institutions such as Ivy-League universities to profit off the selling of one's future at $20,000 a term. This closes those of lower income groups off from the opportunity to pursue equal levels of education and success as attendance has brought an advantage that poverty cannot afford. This crisis reaffirms and reinforces the issues of cyclical and systemic poverty, bringing society back to its days of social class division and turning what was meant to be a social ladder into a slippery waterfall, running counterintuitive and counterproductive to its initial objective.	This statement suggests overly generally that the main function of education of is to tackle poverty, which is a statement that readers are likely to take issue with An insightful and well-executed paragraph built on good analysis

Furthermore, while education could remain as a means towards achieving social mobility, it remains key to acknowledge that addressing certain inequities and discriminatory practices within society have a significant part to play in the alleviation of the issue of poverty. [One must] remain cognizant of the fact that poverty is often targeted and is symptomatic of economic and social discrimination. It remains imperative that governments and societies acknowledge and seek to resolve the inherent and systemic issues behind poverty. Poverty is twice as likely to affect more those marginalised and disenfranchised in society, according to a study done by the OECD. Those of minority groups and the women in many societies remain both the most exploited and affected by the poverty crisis. For example, in the United States, the African-Americans are two times more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to have experienced poverty at least once in their lives, while Latin Americans are three times more likely, according to a survey done by Yale University. Thus, we understand that poverty runs along racial [and minority] lines and tensions as it is inadvertent that the many systems that govern us as a global society have long been built through the lenses of self-preservation, identity, and culture. This is felt as many systems and structures across the world have always been built in the principles of the norm and are therefore inherently tied towards the needs of the majority, thus failing to cater to the many minority groups. Our social systems and designs are thus narrow, seeking mainly to uplift the majority, [excluding] the minority. Thus, beyond education, redesigning systems of government to better suit the needs of minority groups by providing targeted support that reintegrate the marginalised into our system economically is key. For example, efforts made to ensure an unprejudiced and racially proportioned workforce can seek to better reintegrate those of marginalised groups, providing truly equal opportunity. This comes through sustained efforts to provide minority representation in our governing bodies that can better design social systems and projects that will more aptly cater to the needs of minority groups, ending the skewed and minority-concentrated poverty cycle by stepping in and designing personalised solutions rather than arbitrary prescriptive solutions.	Good line of argument that shows a deeper understanding of the subject matter

Beyond the statistics, the argument could benefit from an analysis of the problem

A sense of the deeper social factors surrounding the roots of inequality, as well as whether these still exist today would help further the argument

How education might play a role in changing entrenched systems could also be considered for a more complex understanding of the issue |
| Lastly, while education remains a crucial part of the effort to mitigate the issue of poverty, it remains paramount to recognise that poverty in itself might be an impossible issue to solve as its nature is inherently intertwined with the structures of society, as the population tackles the crisis of overpopulation. As the population rises and skyrockets, systems have become increasingly competitive and protectionist, and the race towards competing for resources has landed our societies in positions where the financially disenfranchised have become merely a by-product of the necessary. The issues of scarcity and competing for resources has caused our systems to become increasingly hostile and antagonistic to those in need. Focus has shifted away from altruism and self-interest has dominated the limelight as self-preservation remains an indelible part of the human identity. Poverty is a by-product of a fiercely competitive and self-serving economy and while altruism and philanthropy occasionally squeeze themselves into arbitrary forms of debate and dialogue, it is pragmatic to be resigned to the fact that poverty will always be a reality when resources are vied for and not shared. Thus society is called to question the price of economic development and social disenfranchisement and is instead encouraged to reevaluate the dissonance in the human experience and whether the pure pursuit of self-interest remain viable in the long run. | Thoughtful point

These assertions would be much stronger if they were supported by illustration

Good argument made about the impossibility of 'solving' inequality |

Ultimately, while education continues to aspire its ability to provide equality and social mobility to those in need, we are still called to reevaluate the issues posed by rising populations and prejudice. (Erica Wee, 18-I1)	Conclusion does not return to the question and take a clear enough stance on it

5   To what extent can education solve the problem of poverty?

This essay demonstrates a balanced perspective that is insightful, knowledgeable and balanced. The arguments made are cogent and well supported by illustration that is effectively developed. The language used is nuanced and varied, such that the complex meanings can be concisely conveyed.	
Poverty has existed in mankind since time immemorial, given that those in positions of power usually hold greater wealth than the rest. The World Bank officially defines [those in] absolute poverty as those earning below US$0.99 per day, while in developed nations, the issue of relative poverty in which the bottom tier income earners do not enjoy the spoils of the nation's growth is also prevalent. Given the disastrous effects of poverty on the economy, social stability of a country and dehumanization of those affected, many have offered solutions and sparked debates on the effectiveness of such measures. Among those contended, education has been highly regarded as a prerequisite to the alleviation of poverty. However, I would contend that education is not the ultimate panacea to poverty and needs to be implemented together with other policies from governments, given the long term nature of education. Therefore, while education is key to the eradication of poverty, it has its limitations that require careful consideration too.	Clear discussion of absolute and relative poverty - definitions Balanced and nuanced thesis statement
Prima facie, education seems to be an uplifting force to the impoverished as it equips them with the necessary skills they would require in order to be employable. A strong advocate for female education, Malala Yousafzai, strongly believes in the power of education in her home country, Pakistan, as it grants women the financial independence they require to extricate themselves from the clutches of poverty and being subservient to the male authorities in their lives. Through education, individuals are empowered to take control of their own fate and earn a living of their own, thus breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. Another case in point would be the strong emphasis placed on educating the Syrian refugees who have sought solace in various European countries like Germany. The refugee youths recognise the importance of education to integrat[ing] into the country and gaining employment in the future, so as to support their younger siblings and parents. It is then not a shocking revelation that education provides one with the means to increase one's economic value in society and lift oneself out of poverty.	A range of functions played by education in various contexts is explored here, lending weight to its ability to tackle the complex nature of poverty The link to poverty could be made explicit here
However, while the above argument may be valid, it fails to consider the other factors that may hamper the effectiveness of education in dealing with poverty. The above argument has an erroneous assumption that the economic systems and structures put in place are conducive for educated people to take up jobs in the market which would hopefully guarantee them a sustainable means of generating income. However, whether poverty can ultimately be solved is highly dependent on the existing economic structure of the country. A case in point would be China's communist stance in the early 1870s. Given China's reclusive state at that point in time, the jobs available for the masses were limited in number and wages. Hence, even with education, many would still find themselves in a pitiful position, either being unemployed or hold[ing] a low-paying job. It was only when Deng Xiao Ping implemented the Open Door Policy, [that] foreign investors flooded into the Key Economic Zones of Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing. While education is vital to equipping one with the necessary skill sets, the road to eradicating	Good insight

poverty has obstacles that require economic restructuring by bigger powers at play. Therefore, the success of eliminating poverty with education has to be considered [alongside] other factors at hand.	
Moreover, education is necessary to combat other causes of poverty besides not being skilled enough to be employed. When one examines the constellation of factors that allow poverty to thrive, one discovers that poor health and sanitation cripples the individual's ability to bring bread and butter [] home. The United Nations reports that there are 80 billion people in the continent of Africa with HIV or AIDS. What this entails is that sole breadwinners of households may be severely ill or pass on in their early years, leaving defenseless children behind to fend for themselves. Without consistent awareness and educational campaigns to prevent diseases, more would continue ignorant of good hygiene practices, allowing more infections to breed and fester within the village or nation. Therefore, education is essential in reducing the susceptibility of the impoverished to fatal[] diseases that threaten to propagate poverty in the households. World Vision, a non-profit organisation, shares a similar vision and sends teams of humanitarian workers to rural villages in India. Through their frequent visits and stations there, they teach the importance of handwashing and and advise against open defecation that may lead to further outbreak of diseases. They equip villagers with the necessary [] knowledge to take care of one's own health, thus increasing their immunity to many transmittable diseases. Therefore, health education is pivotal in ensuring that individuals do not spiral further down into poverty when members of the family succumb to life threatening illness or when they have to foot the medical bills of the ill family member.	Good insight Inaccurate statistic
All in all, education provides glimmers of hope for individuals to upgrade themselves and strengthens their ability to escape poverty. It is [because of] this recognition of the value of education that many countries like Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea have placed an emphasis on education. The miraculous transformation of Singapore from a third world country to first in just 50 years is often credited to founding father Lee Kwan Yew's foresight in making the first 10 years of education compulsory. However, with every solution, there are still gaps and flaws. Due to the complex nature of poverty, education cannot be relied solely upon to erase poverty from the face of this earth. Instead, other factors must be considered and it is the onus of the government to act on behalf of the impoverished by exerting their power and influence to alleviate the plight of the financially disadvantaged. (Oh Anna, 18-I5)	

6 **'Not enough has been done to tackle discrimination in the world today.' Do you agree?**

The strength of this essay lies in the student's use of an extensive range of examples. The breadth of the examples cited, together with decent analysis of whether they indicate the adequacy and effectiveness of efforts to tackle discrimination, displays the student's knowledge of current affairs. Arguments with greater depth could be crafted in this essay by consistently demonstrating the links between initiatives conducted by various stakeholders and, more importantly, considering the nature of discrimination itself (its origins, factors that cause it to persist), so as to evaluate whether what has been done to tackle it is enough.

Currently, many of us are witnessing an international movement unfold, identified by its hashtag #metoo. It was sparked by a series of accusations on former director Harvey Weinstein who had allegedly sexually abused actresses under him and covered [the incidents] up. This was followed by a collective outcry from women all around the world who began to step forward and share their own stories about being sexually harassed in the workplace, and how these incidents had all been swept under the carpet. This movement aptly illustrates how gender discrimination, one of the many forms that discrimination can take, still exists in our society. More can be done, not only by the government, but by corporations and societies to eradicate discrimination from today's world.	Is harassment the same as discrimination? What are other forms of discrimination? The stand has been stated clearly but the thesis (central argument) could be outlined here.
It is no lie that governments have come a long way in tackling discrimination. They have taken steps through enacting policies and creating systems which discourage discrimination and promote cohesiveness. Systems and laws that marginalise and subjugate certain groups hardly exist anymore in today's world. Women now have suffrage rights in almost every nation in the world. Apartheid has become a thing of the past. Even in more conservative countries, there have been steps taken to reduce discrimination. Recently, in Saudi Arabia, women have finally been allowed to drive outside on their own, a privilege that many might take for granted but signifies a huge leap towards gender equality in Saudi Arabia and other similar countries.	Making stronger links between this list of initiatives and the changing mindsets or factors which are the result of changing times would help develop the explanation further.
Society has also been responsible in taking steps to tackle discrimination. Following the #metoo movement, there was mass outrage [in] societies all around the world, which led to the persecution of many individuals guilty of such harassment. Similar movements have also appeared, stemming from society's desire to end discrimination. These movements include the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the #HeforShe movement, which fight for an end to police brutality and racial profiling targeting blacks and for gender equality respectively. These movements stem from the same belief that the world would be a better place without discrimination, and the popularity of these movements suggests that many in society share this belief. Society's mindset is shifting, and it seems to favour ending discrimination.	Such a change in mindset is reflected by the movements cited here, but what are the effects of the movements?
However, despite these efforts, the fact that discrimination still exists in today's world and is arguably becoming increasingly prevalent suggests that the steps taken so far have become inadequate.	Evaluative claim of whether what has been done is "enough".
Many governments may have put in place measures and policies to combat discrimination, but they are still insufficient in eradicating deep-seated cultural beliefs. In many cultures, there are still extreme traditions still in practice which promote discrimination, especially gender discrimination. Menstrual huts in countries such as Nepal are a practice in which girls having their period are banished [from] the house to stay in a small hut for the duration of	Reinforce the point that this practice is an extreme form of gender discrimination and its

their period. These huts are often poorly constructed and leave the inhabitants at the mercy of the elements. There have been numerous cases of girls dying due to disease or succumbing to the elements during this period of time. Although there are laws which outlaw this practice, a lack of enforcement results in these practices being carried on in less developed areas. There is still more that the governments can do.	very persistence in today's world points to the inadequacy of what has been done so far to tackle discrimination.
Corporations also play a part in this problem and can do more in reducing discrimination. Often, discrimination occurs within these corporations behind closed doors. It has been made known to the public that in Hollywood, female actresses are paid far less than their male counterparts. Many companies also tend to prioritise the employment of individuals who match a certain profile, thereby discriminating against others. Many ex-convicts have experienced the difficulty of finding jobs after they are released. It is common for their job interviews to end upon the interviewer finding out that they had been to jail before. Although there are establishments such as Eighteen Chefs which aims to end this discrimination by prioritising the employment of ex-convicts, these are exceptions to the norm and many corporations continue to contribute to growing discrimination in today's world.	Further substantiation and elaboration could help to develop the evaluation here further, so as to make a more convincing claim that not enough has been done.
Although many societies appear to be in support of reducing discrimination, many societies have in fact taken steps backwards. Racism, sexism and other discriminatory sentiments are becoming increasingly prevalent in many societies. The rise of far-right leaders such as Trump has also emboldened these hate groups, encouraging them to move from the fringes of society into mainstream society, making their presence greater. In Brazil, the people recently elected a far-right, authoritarian leader who has previously openly made sexist comments to the press. The removal of German Chancellor Angela Merkel is another notable recent incident and these show the growing anti-inclusiveness sentiments from multiple societies. It would seem as though societies are not only doing too little to tackle discrimination, but are encouraging it.	A valid and potentially strong claim here, but it could be reinforced with greater explanation and evaluation of the significance of the examples cited.
Steps have indeed been taken to tackle discrimination from many aspects. However, discrimination is currently on the rise and it is evident that not enough is being done to tackle this worrying trend. It would take increased efforts from the government, corporations and societies in order to put a stop to this growing discrimination in our world today. (Chong Chi Sum, 18-E5)	

7 'Much appeal but little value.' Is this an apt description of tourism in the modern world?

This essay is generally very well-executed with clear lines of argument relating to the value of tourism in the modern world. However, addressing the 'appeal' aspect of the question (that people travel for the sake of mere enjoyment) would allow for a greater scope of discussion beyond the economic and cultural aspects. The discussion could also be deepened with a more sustained consideration of the relevance of the modern day context. The use of language is clear and competent, and the arguments are passionately and convincingly conveyed here.

[Looking] back in time, only the rich and wealthy could afford to travel in airplanes and embark on an adventure in a distant country. Now[,] in the 21st century, traveling is [commonplace] amongst everyday civilians. This is largely credited to the advancements in technology and the rise of budget airlines in the early 2000s. Traveling and tourism [are] now affordable for many. The affordability of tourism has enticed many, and the number of tourists has only been increasing ever since the first budget airline was introduced. Many of the sites tourists choose to visit can be cultural or environmental in nature, as long as [they allow] them to immerse in an experience that is different from their mundane and dull lives back in their home country. However, the rise of tourism is not one without its drawbacks. Over the years, many tourism-related problems have surfaced, such as cultural dilution or the lack of authenticity. Hence, this has raised skepticism on whether tourism still has any value in the modern world today. Nonetheless, I believe that tourism is still extremely valuable, or even more so today, as it has helped countries gain geo-political soft power, economic revenue, and might be the only way a nation can hold on to their collective identity and traditions.	The introduction is very well executed: clear and effective in setting the context, and in stating the overall stand Good: addresses both appeal and value Might be useful to also consider the perspective of the individual, since appeal relates to individuals too
Indeed, the commercialization of tourism to generate profit has led to the devaluing of certain types of tourism. This is especially [the case] with cultural tourism. Cultural and heritage sites are revamped and rejuvenated to look appealing to tourists looking for the perfect place to take an Instagram-worthy photograph. Original facades of buildings are replaced with fresh coats of paint, whilst traditional practices and rituals now incorporate a segment for [monetary] donations. The well-known long-necked women in Thailand, an indigenous group of people [who] use metal rings to extend their necks to look beautiful, have experienced the effects of over-commercialisation. These women now dress up for the tourists and pose for photos without being told to do so. The new face of tourism today is seen by many as superficial. Tourists flock to national parks and exotic locations with the intent of establishing that one has visited the place, not with the intent of gaining new knowledge. Hence, many strongly feel that despite the immense appeal tourism has, it serves little role in offering intangible immersive experiences and fresh insights due to the nature of its appeal today. Instead of [offering] exploration and discovery, it now takes on a more superficial form.	Besides Instagram, can a stronger connection be made to the context of the modern world? Why/ how might this example be seen as a devaluation of culture? This assertion needs to be proved and contextualised in the modern world

However, in a different light, tourism might be the only way countries get to hold on to the last remnants of their vanishing traditions and pristine environments. In a world built on capitalist principles, every aspect of society is associated to its economic value. In an increasingly competitive world today, attaining economic success is vital to survival. Hence, many cultural sites are destroyed as they present no economic value. Pristine forests are razed to the ground under the forces of urbanisation. Perhaps, the only way to keep these practices alive and the environment intact is to present [them] as [] profit-making opportunit[ies]. Take Bhutan for example: despite [] advocating for preservation of the environment and wildlife, [they] still [have] to rely on tourism to fund their preservation activities. The indigenous tribe of Sri Lanka, also known as the Veddas, still continue their practice today because of tourism. Even an ancient city like Rome [] still keeps its crumbling infrastructure instead of replacing it with towering skyscrapers, partially due to the large number of tourists that set foot into the city every year. Thus, even though tourism may be overly commercialised in some cases, it is too parochial to completely disregard the intrinsic value of tourism in preserving certain cultures and the environment, especially so in a competitive global landscape today. Cultures and the environment are constantly under the threat of modernity, but the economic appeal of these tourist sites may ironically be the only way to keep these places alive.	The contextualisation here is helpful in addressing the focus on the modern world in the question Insightful and well-executed line of argument, conveying an understanding of the nuanced connections amongst various factors
In addition, tourism may help a country gain soft power in the geopolitical scene. The popularity of such tourist attractions can help a country extend their influence across geographical borders. For example, many [dedicated] Korean pop fans visit South Korea to visit the country many of their idols were born in, and [become] obsessed over the customs Koreans abide by, be it the food or the [fashion]. Hollywood is also a tourist attraction [that was] popular even in the 1900s. Many movie fanatics visit this place to see where their favorite movies were filmed. The popularity of these locations serve[s] as a means to propagate one's culture and ideologies. The existence of Hollywood as a tourist site only [makes] it more popular, and a more powerful medium to convey messages that influence the thinking of its followers. Beyond revenue, tourism helps a country gain significance and influence in an increasingly globalized world today.	Not sure if this is the result of tourism or tourism simply riding on the success of exportation of culture The argument makes sense, but the idea of propagating ideology and gaining influence needs to be developed further. Why is this important?
We celebrate and admire our environment and vibrant cultures, not look upon the ashes of them. Despite many feeling that tourism has little intrinsic value today it is undeniable that tourism still serves a critical role in preserving traditions and the environment, as well as helping a country exert their geopolitical influence. On a more optimistic note, there has been greater advocacy for more responsible tourism, to allow tourists sites to retain their authenticity and value. Tourism will continue to be more popular, and hopefully become less commercialised to increase its value and debunk negative sentiments towards it today. Hence, these sites of great appeal serve great value in the modern world today, and perhaps become even more valuable in the near future. *(Jolyn Koh, 18-I2)*	Good insight here, with a succinct and effective summing up of the various perspectives about the issue

7   'Much appeal but little value.' Is this an apt description of tourism in the modern world?

An authentic piece of work with multiple insights which are interesting and original. Evidence of personal voice is quite cleverly injected throughout the essay. There could have been a little more investigation of what 'value' could mean, so as to clarify the assertions made. This essay's approach stands in contrast to the previous sample, in that here we find a rather more descriptive approach which nevertheless weaves in the important evaluative elements, whereas the previous sample takes a more structured approach to addressing the question. Both are valuable in their own ways!

Ever since businessmen and profit-chasing people [discovered] transportation, tourism has been a largely successful and especially widespread industry, with most countries possessing a share in this market regardless of economic standing. In some cases, the 'fever' from this almost unbelievably lucrative field can even reshape a country or location, like in Sri Lanka where the sector that employs the most people is the tertiary services sector. Tourism in itself involves two fields: cultural immersion or experience, and simply pleasure-seeking. However in recent years, this balance of two objectives has seemingly been disrupted, with pleasure-seeking tourism overshadowing the other, making tourism appear to be of "much appeal but little value". This view, however, is inherently flawed, in that tourism is not so simple that it can be strictly defined as one or the other despite what the current situation seems like, hence "much appeal but little value" is more a surface-level description than an apt one of modern tourism.	Good context setting Why is pleasure not considered valuable? Link the "modern world" context more clearly to the significance of tourism.
Firstly, such a description is generally derived from statistics: more potential tourists are going for scenic or fun based tours. In the modern world, life is generally filled with work, burdens of duty and simply the stress of living in a pragmatic, progressive society. As such, it is natural to think that in the sparse overseas breaks that people get, they will prefer to spend it seeking thrill and instinctive pleasure, which they then find in amusement parks, scenic routes, ski resorts et cetera, that trigger a basic form of joy and exhilaration in tourists. Following this train of thought, trends show that places of such features and facilities are generally more popular, such as the Gold Coast [and] Great Ocean Road [] in Australia, Three Gorges Valley in China, Lotte World in Korea, and the ever-present, literally universal brands like Universal Studios and Disneyland in various countries. The list can extend perceptibly forever, but the gist is that pleasure-seeking tours seem to be the majority, even the representative image, of the modern tourism industry. However, is this really true? It must be noted that for every Gold Coast there is a colonial-age gold-mine town in Melbourne, for every Three Gorges Valley there is a Forbidden City, for a single Lotte World Korea is inundated with tourist-based kimchi making workshops. Essentially every pleasure-based tourism outlet has a counterpart delving into cultural and historical side, which is what people classify as "tourism with value". Furthermore, these parts of tourism are almost [as] popular as their counterparts! It is true that in typical vacation peak periods, pleasure-based tours are largely favoured over "tours with value", but "value" tours have a consistency throughout the year that the pleasure-based sector [is] hard-pressed to even approach. Hence, the fact that more people are going for pleasure-seeking tourism when given a choice does not in any way mean that the value sector is diminished in any way.	What does "value" mean? What kind of value are we referring to? Why is one more valuable than the other? What do you mean by this? Further explication of the term "value" is needed for clarity

Now, some then go further to argue that even if there is an equal demand for both types of tourism, families still tend to go for pleasure-based tours. It is true that most people tend to go overseas as one family for vacation, and that the adults, being [on] the wiser, more considerate half of the age spectrum, tend to follow their children's whims that tend to direct them towards 'fun' tours. Children, being less appreciative of what seems like days upon boring days of staring at old buildings and statues, may present an obstacle for their parents who simply want to spend quality time with their families more than they want to immerse themselves into the country and its culture. As such families tend towards 'fun' tours so the kids get their non-boring active experiences, and the adults enjoy the satisfaction of soaking in the exuberance their children exude excessively. A win-win situation, with the discountable loss of "value" on the tour.	Reference to the modern world context?
However, to think that this diminishes the "value" of the tour is false. The largest evidence disproving this, are the exact same package tours that families choose. More often than not such tour packages meld both types of tourism together, with highlights from both sectors combined in such a way that nothing is lacking. A tour of Hokkaido can include a ski resort for kids to have their fun, and a natural Hot Spring Resorts like Jigokudani Onsen Resort en route to the ski resort for the family to 'soak' up the Japanese bath culture, quite literally! Furthermore, it is wrong to assume that kids cannot appreciate the cultural parts of tours. The best examples are food-making workshops where the kids find more pleasure in interacting with local traditional culinary skills than even the adults. Hence, it is not true that family tours results in more than tourism being so-called appeal-dominant.	This seems to contradict what was said earlier This section is quite descriptive. More explanation would help drive the argument Appeal need not necessarily mean that it is devoid of value
In truth, the description of "much appeal but little value" is actually flawed in itself. The phrasing of the statement all but determines this to be a dichotomy, where only one can be enjoyed, at the cost of the other. This dichotomy, however, is completely untrue on two counts. Firstly, there are many aspects of tourism that combine the two types perfectly. Aside from the aforementioned example of culinary workshops, there are many other instances of such. Taiwan tours sometimes include fruit picking when in season, but fun to do and eat, and giving insight to the lives of farmers there. China tours can include paper lantern making, both fun and culturally significant. Most countries even almost definitely include dressing up in ethnic clothing at some point, even if wearing a cowboy outfit in America does not count. Fun is never predicated upon specific circumstances like good scenery or reputed and exhilarating theme parks, but rather is something that crops up in any and every part of any activity, simply because it originates from the participant. Hence, any claim to a dichotomy in tourism is in truth rather shallow.	Why pleasure and value are considered to be mutually exclusive is worth questioning
The second count is regarding the fact that value is also very subjective. Finding value in anything depends on a person and their criterion of such. In extreme examples, to a theme park designer, a full visit at Gold Coast has immense value. Even after disregarding [this], realistic tours also hold value regardless of type. A Hokkaido skiing trip can have value in insight to Japanese lifestyle went tourists chance upon the annual high school skiing trips, where an entire contingent of students go skiing for a week in January to relieve stress and have fun in the school year. Value is something that has to be, and can be sought, as long as one keeps an open mind. Hence, the dichotomy in tourism is completely lacking foundation on which such a statement can be held as true.	

Therefore, despite what appears in current trends and context to be a domination of pleasure-seeking tourism, the description of "much appeal but little value" can only function as barely more than a comment on tourism that lacks any in-depth thought, as the dichotomy stated is non-existent to begin with. In honest opinion, the description sounds more like someone whining about a tour. Besides, who says the value in tourism doesn't have appeal, or rather that the appeal of tourism isn't part of its value?

(Ma Wee Kai, 18-A6)

9   Are ethical practices the key to a successful business?

*This essay engages the question within the relevant context of consumer trends and develops generally clear and fluent arguments based on the behaviours of consumers as well as the mindsets that drive them. Because the question involves the crucial term "the key", a sustained evaluation of how ethical practices are **the essential factor** for a successful business is required. While this essay argues for the importance of ethical practices to gaining consumers' trust and in turn enabling the successful running of a business, a deeper examination of the power the consumer holds and how business ethics is of utmost significance would help strengthen the argument.*

Our increasingly consumerist society has led to the rise of numerous new businesses, and it is projected that many more new industries are to be created in the future. However, many are unaware of what goes on behind the scenes of large corporations. With increasing awareness of business ethics in recent years, many have come to question whether the practices of various companies are moral, which has in turn led to the downfall of various corporations. This leads us to the question: are ethical practices the key to a profitable yet long-lasting business? I believe so, as despite the decreased costs provided by unethical alternative, ensuring that one's practices are ethical is [on the] overall less risky, and can serve as an effective marketing strategy as well as a means to gain consumers' long-lasting trust or support.	Clearer links are needed between ethical practices and the sustainability of businesses, and between sustainability and success
Firstly, it is more beneficial to stick to ethical practices, rather than risk one's business by breaking laws. There are many companies that go through with unethical procedures for benefits such as reduced costs, with the belief that they will not be caught. Numerous companies, especially factories, go through practices such as dumping untreated chemical waste into water bodies, rather than treating said waste first due to the money that it would require. However, many of these companies have also been heavily fined, some even shut down overnight due to such practices, with many years of work going to waste all for the comparatively measly amount of money and effort that they saved by taking unethical alternatives. Hence, ethical practices can better ensure the long-term success of a business as they do not run the risk of breaking the law.	Some specific examples would help substantiate this paragraph better What leads to the uncovering of unethical business practices? Whether ethical practices are "the key" to successful businesses needs to be evaluated
Secondly, although some unethical practices may not be illegal, businesses will not be able to gain the support of customers if they go through with [such practices]. With an increasing awareness of business ethics, more consumers have begun to pay more attention to the practices of the businesses they purchase from. In many cases when the unethical practices of these businesses come to light, it has led to a great decrease in patrons for these corporations and hence a huge drop in income. One example of this is Sea World, a multi-million dollar aquarium or water park, which has been the centre of controversies regarding their treatment of their animals. More specifically, thousands have criticised them for having enclosures much too small for their killer whales. In addition, it has come to light that these killer whales suffer further unethical treatment such as workers forcefully collecting sperm from them for breeding purposes, which has sparked outrage online amongst many animal activists. Hundreds have also gone as far as to call for the boycott of Sea World, and signed petitions to have it shut down. This has led to a great drop in revenue for the company. Although some may believe that they can go through with unethical practices if they are not illegal, these practices will deter the public from supporting these companies. As consumers hold the power to determine the success of a business, it is	Clarify with some brief examples how some unethical practices may not be illegal How have people's mindsets changed such that consumers are becoming more aware of business ethics? This is an important link back to the question Elaborate on the significance of the consumers' power

essential to gain their trust and support. Hence, ethical practices are essential to gaining the trust and support of consumers, who have the power to determine the success of one's business.	
Thirdly, ethical practices are often advertised by companies, and have proven to be an effective marketing strategy of successful businesses. Many companies such as The Body Shop have used the fact that their products are cruelty-free to advertise themselves. Moreover, society has recently seen a rise in social enterprises, who base their business around a charitable cause. One example is the restaurant Eighteen Chefs, the owner of which is an ex-convict who wishes to hire other fellow ex-convicts who have difficulties finding jobs due to their past. The ethical practices of these companies [have] earned the admiration of many, and have even helped them gain many new customers, who support these companies as they believe they are supporting a charitable cause by doing so. As ethical practices have proven to be key to the rise of these two companies, they are essential to the success of a business.	Hedging the claim here would help avoid over-generalising
However, there are many who still go through with unethical practices, believing that their benefits outweigh their moral ambiguity. Big companies such as Apple or Forever 21 hire cheap labour from those in countries such as China. The workers whom they employ have to endure harsh working conditions with very little pay. These companies have saved on manufacturing costs due to this, and have made large amounts of profit this way. However, I still believe that ethical practices are the key to successful businesses, as the future of these companies have become ambiguous. In the present, where information is easily accessible and spreads quickly, these practices by theses companies have been made known to more and more people. This has led many to criticise and also stop supporting these companies. Although they are currently still very successful, it is uncertain whether they will remain so in the future, especially with the increasing [advocacy] of the rights of foreign factory workers. Hence, ethical practices are essential to a business's long-term success.	What does the fact that there are many (financially) successful businesses which have ethically questionable practices, suggest about ethics vs business success? Stronger grounds for such doubt need to be built. Specific examples can help!
Especially as society is changing [such that people are] becoming more aware of how their money is used, businesses should adopt ethical practices to ensure their success, as these practices offer less risk, can gain the support and trust of consumers as well as serve as an effective marketing strategy. (Ngai Win Lynn, 18-U4)	A concise conclusion that captures the central argument Linking back to the question's focus on whether ethical practices are "the key" would help reinforce the essential argument

10   'Clothes make a man.' Do you agree with this view?

A well-written essay with a clear personal voice that expresses conviction in the claims made. However, although this essay engages the question and provides pertinent arguments (some of which show insight), there is potential for a more extensive scope of arguments and substantiation. In addition, the evaluation can be deepened with greater attention paid to the nuances in the relationship between some of the factors discussed in this essay.

The invention of clothing dates back to humanity's caveman days, with the practical purpose of being protected from weather elements. Since then, something that has become commonplace in our lives has adopted multiple purposes such as [making a] fashion statement and [fostering] cultural pride. While it can be increasingly justified that the clothing we put on our bodies can become more accurate representations of ourselves, it is still very much lacking in becoming a holistic showcase of who we really are.	This is a pertinent claim in response to the question, but it requires a clear reason
Foremostly, an article of clothing is essentially a piece of fabric that can be easily donned and removed. While it might help in our outward expression of personality, it does not serve any [outstanding] or permanent impact on our inner selves. What defines a man is not merely his outer appearance but more importantly his morals, character and mindset. For example, while each culture has its own ethnic wear such as the cheongsam for Chinese and the sari for Indians [...]. The true mark of a member of that cultural group is not the garment but the involvement of that individual in cultural practices, such as celebrating cultural festivals and understanding and appreciation for one's cultural group. While cultural practices can manifest in the form of clothing such as the Muslim ladies having to wear the hijab daily, it should not be the sole marker of identity. One's identity comprises a variety of markers. While clothing is one, it arguably pales in comparison to one's inner beliefs and how the person perceives themselves. Looking back at the [incident] in which a Caucasian girl who wore a cheongsam for her prom sparked rage among fellow netizens[...]. They might have believed that only people of Chinese ethnicity should wear the traditional attire. However, it is important to note that while the piece of clothing could represent a cultural group, the true representation of the culture is the people themselves and how they embody the [cultural] spirit in [their] actions and practices. Therefore, clothing cannot replace the man himself when it comes to the expression of himself or his social groups.	Does this claim dismiss clothing's influence on our psyche? Good consideration of identity markers A more nuanced argument could be made by considering how external appearances and inner beliefs are not sharply disparate or distinct
On the other hand, given the context of our increasingly digitised world where the mass media is so rampant in our lives [...]. The increased focus on outer appearances could have prompted the increasing attention on how one dresses. While I concede that one's grooming does play an important role in determining how one chose to come across to others and that the individual has the freedom to decide [how they dress],[...]. In our technological age, the fast fashion and advertising industry has become commendably successful in influencing our choices even on the subconscious level. As we join the chase to become fashionable in our attire, the articles of clothing become less and less diverse as we tend to congregate towards hot fashion trend such as prominent fashion in the [60s] which saw both celebrities and individuals alike sporting bell-bottom jeans and loud printed tops. As the clothing we don become more unified, can we still say that fashion is an outward expression of oneself? As our fashion choices become more influenced by the environment around us through the opinions of others and social norms, the choice of clothing that we choose to put on may not be a real representation of who we are but perhaps made for us under the social pressure	The increased focus on outer appearances and greater attention to our choice of clothing should be linked to how clothes "make the man" Insightful observation, but do note that the 'real' self is shaped by societal forces too and that conformity could be a conscious choice as well

that we reside in.	
When describing a person, one would usually not refer to his [or her] [attire] but character traits that he or she possesses, such as bravery, faith or kindness. This goes to show that the more qualitative aspect of the human interaction is largely emotional and the ultimate mark of a man that leaves a retaining memory on others is not how he dresses but his actions and beliefs. Great figures in history such as Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa were recognised and respected for their conviction and benevolence. Therefore, this goes to show that the mark of a legacy goes much further than just clothing.	Perhaps the idea of a remarkable memory needs to be clarified in this paragraph to distinguish between leaving a significant and memorable contribution and leaving a deep impression
While clothing can be a fun and frivolous indulgence for us, we should never negate the fact that beauty is indeed more than skin-deep. While we appreciate the effort that one has put in to look their best, we should also remind ourselves of those who put in the effort to be their best. While we laugh at the fable "The Emperor's New Clothes", in which a king is deluded in believing that he was wearing the finest clothes available when he is in fact wearing none at all, [...] It serves as a humble reminder to not be swayed by others' opinions and be authentic in our expression of self in whatever form it may be. (Cham Jay Yin, 18-U4)	An eloquent phrasing of the distinction between looking and being one's best A well-constructed ending. To enhance the overall coherence, start the introduction with a reference to this fable and return to it in the conclusion to draw lessons from the fable

11   Is the library redundant in today's world?

This excerpt has a strong personal voice that shows the power of weaving in illustrations in a very skillful way (as opposed to being mechanical in listing them). The student chooses certain highly interesting facts and numbers to highlight in order to bring her points across convincingly - not overwhelming to the point of boring the reader, but just enough to convince and enlighten.

The library was once perceived to be the fountain of knowledge. Students gathered to do research for their group assignments, their noses deep into thick books, children sitting quietly with novels such as "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Roald Dahl, adults flipping through newspapers or browsing the non-fiction for biographies, not a single mobile phone in sight. Now, with the rise of technology and the internet, libraries are no longer the only place to quench our thirst for knowledge. However, does this necessarily mean that libraries have lost their value in today's society, that they are redundant? In light of the fact that libraries do indeed do more than just provide books, it is myopic to think that libraries are losing their place in our world today.	The introduction does a competent job in giving context, raising the point of contention and stating the thesis statement clearly.
Proponents of the view that libraries are becoming obsolete point to the fact that people no longer go to libraries to do research. Google has now become a student's best friend, any doubt we meet in our studies we just whip out our phone and in a matter of seconds and a few swipes, we get the answer. Especially with the presence of Google Scholar, a search engine dedicated to finding scholarly articles, project reports and academic papers are now filled with URL citations, not book titles. Though it may seem that libraries no longer serve the purpose of providing research materials, truth be told, there are still many academic papers, old newspapers cuttings,etc, that cannot be found on the internet. In Singapore, the National Library Board (NLB) keeps digital archives of rare materials in the Central National LIbrary, which are only accessible if one personally is present there. Totalling over 8,700 items, the Rare Collection features some of the most valuable and significant publications from the 19th and early 20th centuries, many of which were issued by the earliest printing presses in Singapore. These original materials are preserved under controlled conditions at Level 13 of the Central National Library. The New York Public Library also stores a total of 755,170 digitised items, ranging from scrapbooks and photographs to manuscripts. Hence, libraries are still a source of digital or physical archives, particularly when historical records are needed.	Perhaps student could have made connection to 'today's world' a bit more explicit before jumping to 'Google'. The level of detail that the student was able to give under timed conditions is impressive.
Some may also argue that people are reading less, and therefore do not step foot into a library. Books are no longer the one and only source of information, with the existence of the Internet, which is fast and convenient. Due to the fast-paced society we live in today, many people lead busy lifestyles, with little time to spend on reading, which can seem frivolous and time-wasting. Even among the few who read, some may choose the alternative of the e-book, saving the hassle of physically going down to the public library to search for a novel that may not even be there. From 2008 to 2010, e-book sales skyrocketed, jumping up to 1260%, as reported by the New York TImes. Although the Kindle may appear to override the physical book entirely, there are still those who prefer the feeling of an actual book in their hands. Physical books evoke a sense of nostalgia and provides us temporary respite from the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives. The satisfaction of feeling and smelling the pages of a book also inspires us to cherish its	Student makes concerted effort to link to 'today's world', a key part of the question. Again, well illustrated with a plethora of facts and numbers. However, we would have liked to see a bit more focus on developing the idea of people reading less (which is what the topic sentence mentioned)

existence. The fact that libraries now are not a quiet and empty graveyard but instead are bustling with people especially on weekends prove that libraries are not losing their appeal.

(Breanna Tan, 18-O3)

11   Is the library redundant in today's world?

> *This excerpt deftly deals with the context of 'today's world' and incorporates elements of 'today's world' into every single content paragraph. It shows a very complete and comprehensive understanding of the context that libraries exist in today, and is filled with substantial and interesting illustrations to make the various points convincing.*

However, although the argument regarding the rise of the internet may seem convincing, it fails to recognize that it is precisely due to the advent of the internet that the library has evolved by incorporating aspects of the internet into their activities. Hence the library remains relevant. Previously, libraries may have been purely traditional, merely acting as a source of information. Yet, in this day and age, libraries may have taken advantage of the benefits of the internet to reach out to the millennials who are extremely tech-savvy. Thus, libraries will be more receptive to the generations of today and are far from redundant. For instance, the Guildford library in fiction employ the use of the internet to encourage young people to read classics such as Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. They have even gone to the extent of using interactive fiction to increase readership. This clearly illustrates that the library has not become outdated, but instead has evolved to cater to the needs of the people, especially individuals who are well-versed with the internet. More often than not, employing the use of the internet may bring great benefits for the library, and in the above case, increased readership. Another compelling example would be the libraries in Singapore. The National Library Board has its own website which provides a myriad of services, ranging from electronic services to even book recommendations to entice the younger generation to visit the libraries more often. This clearly illustrates the fact that libraries have transitioned from old-style libraries to updated and current libraries that accommodate the needs of the current generation. Hence the library is far from redundant.	This argument follows from a previous paragraph discussing the possible obsoleteness of libraries due to the accessibility of info on the internet. Student engages very well with today's context by going into specific examples of how the library has evolved to capitalise on the internet's strengths.
Moreover, in a fast-paced world today, the library can be source of mental refuge. Societies are undeniably more fast paced than before, and thus, it is not uncommon for to experience high stress levels. Hence the weary individual can turn to the library to seek comfort and solace, relaxing one's mind. Their time relaxing in the library can be considered to be relatively short, but individuals are able to relax and perhaps take a well-deserved break. For instance, the George Peabody library in the United State of America is famous for its cathedral-like atrium, marble floors and wrought-iron details. Visitors are able to admire the intricately-designed library, and at the same time, take their minds off their studies or work. This clearly demonstrates that the library, with its aesthetically pleasing designs and cozy environment enables stressed individuals to relax by admiring the library and perhaps temporarily forget their worries, which is especially as they may have been continually stressed due to the extremely fast paced nature of society. Along the same vein, the Bodleian Library in the United Kingdom is well known for its beautifully designed building such as the Old Bodleian library. A deal of visitors enter the library to seek comfort. This clearly demonstrates that libraries are not redundant, but instead are relevant as they serve as a temporary escape for individuals who may be exhausted due to their incredibly huge workloads, thus calming them down and improving their well beings.	Again, student emphasises on a certain aspect of today's world to make her point. This is done consistently throughout the paragraph.
Lastly, the library is far from useless in today's world as they are reliable sources of information and can aid individuals to be more discerning. This is especially important due to the proliferation of fake news on the internet. Unlike the internet, libraries are credible	

as their books are carefully chosen by librarians and also are written by authors with relevant qualifications. Moreover, librarians are able to teach individuals critical evaluation skills, such as discerning reliable and unreliable sources, thus aiding individuals to navigate the plethora of fake news on the internet. For example, in Singapore, the libraries contain academic journals that are written by authors with the relevant expertise, and thus are considered to be reliable. Moreover, the National Library Board as gone to the extent of creating an acronym named "SURE" which stands for Source, Understand, Research, Evaluate to help individuals discern fake from accurate sources. This clearly illustrates that the library is still relevant as they are still highly regarded by many to be credible, especially when fake news is concerned. The internet may contain an almost infinite number of sources, but ultimately the library is consistently more reliable than the internet. Moreover, the library also plays a role to assist individuals to identify fake news from accurate news, acting as an arbiter of truth. Hence, the library is far from redundant in today's world, but instead remains relevant. *(Ashley Lee, 18-U4)*	Once again, student manages to impress with highly relevant and extensively explained examples.

12   Is it fair to say that the arts do nothing to solve the problems of your society?

This essay shows displayed a commendable effort to address the given context ('your society') very well by tying up key aspects of our society to the role of arts in solving societal problems. Key examples were given and explained with reference to the points that were being made skillfully.

Ideally, the arts can bring the problems of our society to light, inspiring us to solve them. Proponents of the arts claim that it has the potential to raise awareness about social issues so that they can be resolved. On the other hand, detractors note that in reality, most of the general public are not exposed to the arts, limiting its impact. In addition, when the arts is commercial in nature, it may not tackle social issues. This is especially true in Singapore, since the arts scene is in a nascent state. While it is not completely fair to say that the arts do nothing to solve the problems of my society, this assessment is somewhat true.	The essay begins rather abruptly. However, the point of contention is fleshed out very well. While the stance is clear, more of the essay's direction (reasons) could have been provided here.
Some believe that the arts have the ability to bring awareness to societal problems, empowering people with the knowledge to rectify them. For instance, the Jack Neo film 'I Not Stupid' demonstrated the emotional impact of the streaming system in primary schools. The main characters encounter discrimination as a result of being to a lower track, and one character even contemplates suicide. Following this film, there were changes to the streaming system in primary schools and the lower track was abolished. Although this was a victory for the power of the arts, however, this was the exception rather than the norm. The majority of Jack Neo's other films have derivative plots, and are known for their comedic value rather than their ability to tackle social issues. Unfortunately, this is true of most of my country's popular films, which entertain rather than educate. Since the vast majority of the arts in my society are not aimed to raise awareness about local problems, they do little to solve them.	Balance is skillfully handled here as the student shows the limitations of the example given (other Jack Neo films)
Unfortunately, the limited viewership of local art that tackles social problems in my society reduces their impact. A National Arts Council (NAC) survey conducted in 2016 revealed that only three in ten Singaporeans paid for an arts event. Of these, the number of people who watched an arts event about problems of my society is likely to be even smaller. Every year, Pink Dot, an organisation advocating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transexual rights, commissions short films which raise awareness about stories of LGBT people living in Singapore. One such film was directed by Boo Junfeng, which features interviews with members of the LGBT community and senior citizens who have misconceptions about them. However, these videos have yet to have a great impact on the Singapore public, where about 70% oppose the legalisation of gay marriage in Singapore, Sadly, it is likely that these short films are preaching to the choir, with mainly those supporting Pink Dot's efforts watching these videos. While the theatre is said to be a place where people can air their views to the masses, in Singapore, it is still mainly frequented by the upper class and educated. Therefore, it has limited impact in solving the problems of society as well. The local play 'Normal' is about the discrimination of Normal stream students in secondary school, inspired by the playwright's own experiences. Due to their small viewership, such pieces of art have ignited little debate and they have not made a splash in the minds of the general public. Hence, it is somewhat fair to say that the arts do little to solve the problems of society.	Student manages to flesh out very apt illustration to show the lack of viewership in various platforms (short films and theatre)

In addition, most Singaporeans only attend art events that are commercial in nature, which do not deal with social issues. For instance, famous musicals that are renowned internationally such as 'Les Miserables' and 'Cats' are popular in Singapore, sometimes selling out. Some plays such as the 'Curious Incident of the Dog at Nighttime' are popular as well. Singaporeans attend these events mostly for entertainment, and there is little demand for art that educates people about social issues. In order to bring home the bacon, it is unlikely that artists would produce such works exclusively. Many theatre companies have to supplement their income with educational plays and musicals aimed at young children, usually using stories of popular fairy tales. Following Jack Neo's success, there has been a proliferation of films that appeal to the average Singaporean consumer, utilizing his crude style of humour. Perhaps in my society, the arts mainly serve as a form of escapism rather than a vehicle for social change. Art events mainly function as family entertainment, as a way for the people to distress after long weeks of work. The other function of art – as a medium to bring social issues to light – still takes a backseat in Singapore. Since most Singaporeans consume art that serves as only entertainment, the arts has a limited impact in solving the problems of my society.	The point made here is a highly pertinent one, and speaks volumes about the perception of the arts amongst Singaporeans. The paragraph could have been better organised. This appears to be the topic sentence in the middle of the paragraph.
In conclusion, although the arts have the potential to aid in solving social problems, it ultimately has a limited impact. Having arts that bring about social change is an aspirational ideal that rarely occurs in my society. In order for the artists to express themselves freely about societal issues, more has to be done to support them. Only then can the arts have a great impact in solving the problems of my society. *(Sarah Mak, 18-O3)*	This line was an unnecessary curveball thrown by the student at the last moment. It is not really relevant to the question and neither was it discussed previously.

Stretch Clinic Writing Exercise

Do you agree that the West has not treated Eastern ideas with respect and dignity?

*This essay, produced in the course of the Stretch Clinic, displays a very strong command of language and an impressive breadth of cultural knowledge. See words and phrases in **bold** that were commendably used. Read and be inspired* 😄

With the rapid globalisation in our world today, societies are more interconnected than ever before, where the **confluence of cultures** has become a common occurrence. Ideally the **assimilation** of a foreign culture into one's society should serve to inform and to enrich. However, in the real world, this is often not the case. The **blatant and careless use** of the Eastern culture by the West is not a rare phenomenon and has been heavily criticised by both Asians and Westerners alike. While we are quick to label any use of Eastern culture in Western mediums as **cultural appropriation**, it is worthwhile to consider whether such use was done so tastefully and respectfully. Is this now considered **cultural appreciation**? Where do we draw the line between the two? This then leads to the question - on this scale, where do Western societies stand when it comes to their use of Eastern ideas and culture? Personally, I believe that the West has not fully grasped the true meaning behind Eastern ideals, hence leading to many lapses when incorporating Eastern elements into Western aspects of life, which constitutes to cultural appropriation on varying levels.	Context very clearly given: globalisation, interconnectivity, mix of cultures. Point of contention very naturally flows from context. Stance clearly given, with some hints of the direction of the essay.
Firstly, Asian cultures are often used in Western pop culture as props for increased exposure and viewership. These aspects of Asian culture that are portrayed are often stereotypical, and showcased in a way that disregards any value and meaning it originally held. This phenomenon is especially **rampant** in the music industry, where aspects of Eastern culture are merely employed as aesthetic tools to appeal to the audience. For example, Selena Gomez's 'Come and Get it' music video features tabla percussion, saris and bindis, despite the song having absolutely nothing to do with India and its culture. Another example would be Nicki Minaj's 'Chun-Li' music video, in which she can be seen wearing chopsticks in her hair and mixing Asian cultures, such as Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese. The significance of the Asian culture is being reduced from something with rich meaning and value to a mere prop used to enhance the visuals of a Western music video and to appeal to the masses. The evident disrespect towards Eastern culture can be seen from the fact that said culture only serves as an embellishment to a Western music video, showing the **unbalanced power dynamics** between both cultures. The aspects of the Eastern culture and the disregard for its cultural significance is a clear sign of the disrespect in the treatment of Eastern culture.	Very good use of illustration. Skillfully explained to bring out the strength of her point.
However, it can be argued that under certain circumstances and in certain situations, the Westerners have learnt to appreciate the history and significance of the culture, before **donning** the traditional outfits, carrying out certain rituals, so as to immerse themselves in the full cultural experience. Take for example, the case of Nick Jonas' and Priyanka Chopra's wedding. Having had a Hindu wedding ceremony, Jonas had worn the traditional Indian outfit and followed through certain Indian rituals. In these circumstances, Jonas' use of the Hindu culture was one that was meaningful, as it was not employed merely as an advertising gimmick or a tool to boost the visuals of the wedding. The wedding ritual portrayed was also an authentic one, not one that only comprised of selective steps just meant for show. Jonas'	Perhaps a weakness of this paragraph is an over-reliance on the single example of Nick Jonas' wedding.

and his family's involvement in the whole wedding ritual is a **prime** example of cultural appreciation, the right way to immerse oneself in a foreign culture, as they demonstrate respect and grace throughout, without devaluing the ritual at all.	
Nonetheless, Jonas' case is a rare one, as Eastern ideas are still more often than not being **portrayed selectively** and in **a stereotypical light** in the West. In order to appeal to the masses again, the diversity of Eastern cultures is reduced to what the public knows and recognises to be 'Eastern'. For example, the Met Gala in 2015 had the theme 'China: Through the Looking Glass', which saw celebrities dressed in outfits, mostly designed by Westerners, with their interpretation of the Chinese culture. This resulted in many celebrities conforming to a **very singular and conventional reduction** of 'China' into a **monolithic mass of stereotyped images**. This false perception of a **simple, homogenous culture** in the East serves as an indicator as to how mainstream media constantly portrays stereotypical aspects of Chinese culture, in the process disregarding the diverse culture China has to offer. Similarly, the perpetration of an oversimplified, stereotypical Asian culture in the West **homogenised** the diverse culture that actually exists, which is a gross disrespect to the origins of these aspects of Eastern culture. *(Constance Ng, 18-U2)*	The paragraphs are well-linked. There is no break in ideas. The Met Gala example was very well explained with expressive vocabulary that translated to a strong personal voice.

JC2 March Common Test Paper 2 Application Question

Frances Corner asserts that fashion has value while Livia Firth argues that fashion results in problems. To what extent are such observations applicable in your society?

Response 1

> *This response is notable for the student's in-depth analysis of certain phenomena in Singapore's context, going far beyond surface-level examples to provide a very rich discussion on the underlying reasons for his observations. His conclusion was also a very memorable one, and leaves the reader with a very complete sense of closure.*

I agree that Livia Firth's view that fashion exploits us and planetary resources and the people who produce them is true, and believe that this is particularly applicable to Singapore. Manifestations of 'exploitation' by consumers by fast fashion labels in my society e.g. MANGO, G2000 looks like how the average Singaporean owns 17 shoes and way more garments than the global average. This clearly indicates the effectiveness of fashion companies in Singapore in promoting a culture of consumerism (thereby exploiting local customer choice) is significant, for a few reasons. Firstly, advertisements tap into local societal norms of materialism as a means for individual or interpersonal actualisation --- be it the promotion of various Chinese based wear on Chinese New Year, or compelling advertisements of clothing as a 'Christmas Gift' or as reward towards wedding anniversaries. The reason why people tend to subscribe to this consumeristic exploitation is because we are culturally attuned towards spending or splurging to relieve stress or to (more narcissistically) self subscribe to the 5Cs, one of them being appearances. Secondly, fast fashion taps into the ignorance and Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) attitude of Singaporeans, compelling us to buy more even in the light of increasing revelations of global exploitation of LEDC (Less Economically Developed Countries) children and women, from big name fast fashion companies. The fact that various movements of awareness such as Go Green or even online sources of information (news) about this economic exploitation exists, and Singapore's apparent unwillingness to make the ethical choice of not buying [or] buying less from these fashion brands show two things. One, that NIMBY culture is a strong deterrent towards making ethical choices as a consumer. Two, that the ability for corporate fashion industries to accentuate consumerism and fast fashion as a necessity has worked to the point in which Singaporeans see and hear, but do not care about the negative ramifications of their conscious choice.	Student tackles exploitation of 'us' as consumers here. Key Singaporean attribute (materialism) + underlying reasons for this norm explored Another Singaporean attribute (NIMBY) identified Student ends off paragraph but giving 2 key insights about NIMBY culture
I agree with Frances Corner's claim in Lines 1 -2 that faster than anything else, what we wear tells the story of who we are depending on the individual --- and agree that this is particularly relevant in my society. In my society, (the	

first aspect of this argument is that) there are various societal standards in which we are able to adjudicate the worth of an individual --- one of them being clothing. Being a conservative society, there are fixed standards to what is modest [or] appropriate dressing --- if someone wears very revealing clothes etc, they are likely to get stared down [or receive] negative impressions; and the converse is true for someone well attired. The second part of this argument is to explain why clothes is one of the main identity markers in my society. Other than the idea of appropriateness [and] modesty above, our fashion sense can represent the way we treat life in general, or even how proud we are of our ubiquitous cultures (being a multicultural society). Given that our eyes are the foremost tool we use to observe people, it is natural that we assess self worth and identity from meets the eye. For example, wearing a sari, songkok or even other traditional wear can indicate how close one is towards their religious beliefs, or even how proud they are to be a representative of their own culture by literally embodying it. This is the reason why many adorn cultural garments in festivals of significance e.g. Deepavali, Hari Raya Haji (celebrations for Indians [and] Malays) --- to embody cultural pride and more importantly, show that you belong to a culture and a community (a perceivably imagined [or] real sense of belonging).	Student explains why there is a presence of these societal standards Student contextualises his examples well to the Singaporean context of being multiracial
Ultimately, there are various ramifications towards the concept of fast fashion, but the ability to move forward is important, as mentioned by both authors at the end of their passages. I believe that there are two ways to do this for the average individual in my society. The first is to acknowledge the arguments of Firth and improve our knowledge or brands [and] products such as MANGO [,] Nike [and]] G2000 in order to make an informed choice as to whether or not your choice of purchasing products would support economic demand (incentivising socio - economic repression); or whether your choice is ethical and supports humane, ethical and environmental means of fast fashion. The second is to disengage the ideas of consumerism versus finding meaning in clothes --- what Firth argues to be negative consumerism can be mitigated if we buy into the idea of appreciating and valuing the meaning and significance of our existing clothes, reducing consumerist habits in the process. *(Lai Chee Yuen, 18-I2)*	Student ends off his response by giving an insightful conclusion that ties in aspects of his arguments while addressing the viewpoints of both authors. This gives a very nice sense of closure and completeness, and gives the impression that the student has truly engaged with ideas from both passages.

Response 2

This response handles balance very well, and shows how students need not (and perhaps, ought not) to stick to an absolute position with regards to whether the observations apply, or do not apply, to Singapore. Also, the response provides a very mature and insightful evaluation of the examples given - always pointing to deeper, underlying reasons for why certain phenomena occur.	
In paragraph 4 of passage 2, Livia Firth argues that fast-fashion has dominated her society by encouraging individuals to purchase clothes excessively without due consideration for the financial, environmental, and ethical sustainability of one's actions. She thus uses this to justify her concerns about fashion in general. In essence, she argues that individuals have been coerced into a culture of excessive consumerism, and that this has resulted in negative consequences. Her observations are applicable to certain segments of my society. While Singapore is an ethnically Asian society, it is not shielded from cultural influences from the West. [This is] primarily due to our historical relationship with the British as a colony in the Straits Settlements, as well as our state-sanctioned embrace of Western cultural markers like the use of English as a first language, and our warm ties with Western, and more specifically, the Anglo-Saxon World Order. Hence, this results in the trends elucidated by Firth holding true in Singapore as this excessive materialist focus has been one of many cultural exports from America and the United Kingdom. This is evidenced by the massive crowds lining [up] outside shopping malls during the infamous "Black Friday" and "Great Singapore Sale" events, where numerous young and middle-class Singaporeans rush to purchase as many clothing items as possible in the spur of the moment. This can also be observed through the recent boom in online fashion sales in the Singapore market, where individuals crave to obtain the newest clothing articles in tandem with current trends. All these observations are products of Western values of materialism and consumerism, amplified by the government's excessive focus on pragmatism, and, by extension, material wealth.	Student not only states the writer's idea, but explains it in the context of what is does in the entire argument. Student very clearly excavates deep, underlying reasons for why the observations are applicable to SG. Apt and pertinent examples are given, and reasons for their existence are explained briefly at the end.
At the same time, however, Firth's observations are not fully applicable to Singapore – while semblances of trends can be observed, the degree of excessive consumption is not as large as Firth describes it to be. While Western values do drive consumer behaviour, some Singaporeans remain deeply-rooted in Asian and Confucian values of restraint, conservative spending, and humility, all of which serve as a counter-balance to the consumerist attitudes as described by Firth. This applies especially to older Singaporeans, who, despite having earned a significant amount of money throughout their career, continue to subscribe to such Asian values and[,] hence, are not as prominent consumers in the fashion industry as they appear to be. Hence, Firth's observations are not fully applicable.	Student shows clear balance in his response by tempering his earlier position with some important qualifications
Conversely, Corner argues, in paragraph 11 of passage 1, that fashion empowers individuals to articulate and express our beliefs. In essence, the	

author argues that fashion is essential to self-expression and elucidates our identities and beliefs and values. Her argument is not immediately applicable to my society. While she points out that fashion is an individual act of expression, Singapore remains deeply rooted in values of collectivism – the notion that one exists in a larger community that extends beyond oneself is an idea deeply entrenched in the Singaporean psyche. This is due to two reasons – the government's excessive focus on promoting a collective national identity, perhaps at the expense of empowering individuals, and the society's continued subscription to Asian and Confucian values of community over self. This can explain why individuals in Singapore may be more hesitant to use fashion to make bold statements, to express their beliefs, or to communicate values that go against societal norms. Most Singaporeans continue to dress according to societal standards of decency, and generally conform to uniformity under most circumstances.	Once again, student points to a deeper ideological reason for the phenomenon described.

Student then expounds on what that ideology looks like in the context of fashion. |
| However, Corner's claim has been gaining increasing relevance and applicability in recent years. The most prominent example of this is Pink Dot SG, an event organised to celebrate the lives of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT). Participants of this annual event wear pink to represent their solidarity with these individuals, and in so doing they proclaim, their beliefs in a public but respectful manner. In response, several religious groups in Singapore urged their adherents to wear white clothing to signal their opposition to the movement. This is but one example in which fashion has amplified attention regarding a cause, and hence generated further discourse on several matters. While the social benefits of such an effect remain undetermined, this shows that Corner's claim may be applicable to my society in the near future.

(Kenneth Hoh, 18-O5) | Once again, student provides thoughtful balance to his previous paragraph by discussing recent developments that appear to be a departure from collectivism. |