



General Paper Bulletin Aug 2019 (JC 2)

Welcome to the second issue of TMJC's GP Bulletin for 2019! Following the previous edition, we bring you yet another selection of the essays written by your schoolmates during the recent Mid-Year Examinations. Once again, thanks to the students who have contributed their essays, who have proven that good writing is very possible despite the exam conditions!

Just a reminder, these essays are not perfect or model essays, and while reading these essays, you may find some of the examples and points useful for application to other questions. Please exercise judgment and discretion in using such information in a manner that is relevant to the question you are answering.

Lastly, you should not attempt to copy and hand them in as your own!

All the best for the upcoming Preliminary Exams!

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Q2. In light of the increasing threat of terrorism, are governments justified in restricting people's rights? (TMJCJ2MYE2019)

Benjamin Franklin, that renowned American politician, once famously said, 'Those who would trade liberty for security deserve neither.' Certainly, in the light of the American Revolution, with democracy and freedom from British tyranny an important part of politics, this was an apt statement. However, the world has changed since Franklin's era, and terrorism, alien to him, is very much familiar to us. In light of the threatening global situation, where threats lurk around every corner, some claim that it is high time for public and national security to take precedence over any admirable, but unrealistic sentiment of human rights. In my opinion, while we should never adopt dictators for the sake of security, it is also foolhardy to assume that adherence to every one of the UNHCR's rights is realistic. Pragmatism, not idealism, will see us through. From physical security, social harmony and political unity, some rights must be compromised, lest the spread of radicalism endanger all.

Across the world, liberal, democratic supporters decry the expansion of state agencies aimed at protecting national sovereignty. Most pointedly, they argue for the right to life, and lambast these organisations, who so often have to employ deadly force to control extremist violence. From Guantanamo Bay in Cuba to the reintroduction of capital punishment, they argue that summary execution is futile and illegal. Indeed, to be used on a law-abiding, peaceful citizen would be both tragic and detestable. However, many of the extremists would harm these very same people, taking life wantonly. Humanity operates under the social contract, where a man is safe from harm, provided he does not hurt others. By willingly and knowingly inflicting suffering on others, terrorists concede their part in the social contract and become anathema to civilisation. While undesirable, when a person fails to demonstrate respect for the lives of his fellow man, then it is unfortunately desirable that his own right to life be forfeited. In that regard, governments have some prerogative to deny such privileges to those who prove too irresponsible to uphold them for their counterparts.

One major global concern today is the growing danger of militant attacks on foreign countries, far from the nations where such ideologies took root. From 9/11 to the truck attacks in Marseille, globalisation has brought threats to our doorstep. To prevent the movement of these dangerous materials and men, governments implement measures aimed at curbing their ability to plan and execute attacks. Such stringent measures include restrictions of when and where a person can travel to, or in-depth background checks aimed at weeding out the bad apples. For example, post 9/11, the U.S. No-Fly List was established, prohibiting certain individuals deemed a threat to national security from flying. Full body scanners and baggage checks became widespread, and the laissez-faire days of flying were over. Most importantly, it contradicted the right to free movement, a core part of democratic freedom, and was seen as governments overstepping their jurisdiction. However, 9/11 was possible because federal systems failed to detain the already flagged suspects, and it was the free movement of incendiaries that allowed for Indonesia's Bali bombing. If such checks and controls had existed, 9/11 may not have happened, thousands would live on, and the world would be very different without all the bloodshed that followed. In that regard, if restricting mobility can prevent the organisation of another pointless attack, then it is certainly justifiable for governments to do so. After all, we would rather return home eventually, compared to never making it home.

Another key international concern is the proliferation of radical ideologies, and the speed at which they promulgate through the media and the internet. In response, governments have cracked down on these abusers of free speech, who incite hate and violence. From supremacists to ultra-conservative Sunni preachers, their transmission of such systems that demand the exclusion and

silencing of opinions contrary to theirs is an affront to the very free speech they rely on for protection. As such, regulations aimed at tackling and controlling these ideologies from spreading now abound. From Singapore denying access to American preachers to proselytise an ultra-conservative version of Christianity in Singapore, to India's closure of mobile networks when faced with communal intersect violence in 2019, such tactics aim to stem the tide of destabilizing opinions. Indeed, social media has been blamed for allowing ISIS to spread gory propaganda of beheadings online, creating new converts who flock as soldiers to join their perverted version of Islam, enacting a reign of terror in the Middle East. Where such virulent viewpoints abound, governments ought to act, and target and contain viewpoints that could potentially harm the social fabric by marginalising and discriminating against their communities. Ironically, by regulating freedom of opinion, governments may save it, as by preserving moderate voices from the depredations of restrictive systems, compromise and consensus - vital to politics without alienation - may be preserved. Ultimately, administrations may be imperfect judges, but compared to raw, unfiltered falsehoods and lies dividing the population, it is justifiable to impose some restrictions on what should be considered free speech, and what ought to be viewed as hate speech.

Finally, governments now face the contentious issue of growing political instability. Populist extremists, terrorists by any other name, tap on the sentiments of the disaffected, goading them to demonstrate violently and excessively against the state. This has serious ramifications for politics, as the rule of the mob supplants the rule of law. Institutions and division of power collapse under the 'will of the people', and it leads to the government increasingly facing political deadlock, hostage to every rabble rouser that leads the next march on Parliament, Senate or Government House. In Pakistan, Prime Minister Sharif was rendered powerless in 2018, as extremist Muslim preachers linked to the Taliban gathered huge mobs to march on Islamabad's capitol district, gutting his government, allowing Imran Khan to unseat him next year at the head of a movement allied with those same clerics. In Britain, UKIP led a populist movement so damaging to David Cameron, that in the wake of the Brexit vote, Cameron was forced to retire, dissolving his government. With the power of riots and demonstrations, even stable, representative governments lose their mandate, leading to the degradation of established, successful systems. Instead of measured, careful reform, unstable and impractical changes occur, to the larger detriment of society. When such protests are unjust and detrimental to political authority, then governments indeed are justified in regulating the freedom of such assembly. The difference between a riot and protest is small. A single extreme element, all too common with the surge of terrorist groups intent on grabbing political power can be extremely damaging. If a protest is violent, unruly and misguided, then governments are more than justified to safeguard the rule of law by controlling assembly. Alternatively, allow terrorists to influence politics and recruit from the organised, dissatisfied citizenry, and the result may very well be a proliferation of radical terrorist fighters, ready to lay down their lives for the cause.

However, critics raise an important challenge to the justification for the restriction of rights. They worry that such regulations are a slippery slope on which nations slide into autocracies and dictatorships. From the powerful Patriot Act in the U.S., to Singapore's Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill, they see these as instruments of tyranny, able to be manipulated by the power hungry to eradicate electoral power. Undeniably, such abuse of power is a real concern, and is a very real possibility. However, while such fears are completely justifiable and unparalleled in importance, they are much less of a worry in the modern nation state. Governments are still subject to their Constitutions, and beholden to a peaceful, democratic voting system. It is only in states which lack these conditions that ambitious men do pose a threat, and with democracy and constitutional law as the bedrock of many states, the worst of these excesses

are inherently curbed. Fundamentally, governments enact these laws with the intent to preserve the long term viability of our rights, and rarely with the intent to eradicate them. With proper constitutions and checks and balances of power, such restrictions can be controlled and prevented from being contrary to the rights of the peaceful and righteous.

Today, terrorism is a rising fear. Governments and citizens are rightfully scared. Nevertheless, we must also balance the need for protection with our fundamental rights. That is, after all, the long term goal of such measures. However, to claim that such changes are unneeded, even as the threat to life spikes, discord reigns and the authority of the law wanes, is a foolhardy expectation. Something must give, and it cannot be through allowing the growth of exclusive ideologies that would seek to eradicate all dissenting views, and impose their own, horrific view of what the world ought to be. The terrorist will not abide by the social contract. To assume he would allow us those same privileges is a misguided assumption.

Chew Jun Zhi 18A301

Remarks: Clear contextualisation of terrorism. Consistently relevant points raised, with good development. Illustrations are fairly wide-ranging, but could have been better developed in some cases. Good control of language, with variety shown in vocabulary and sentence structure. Strong personal voice evident throughout.

Q3: In the world today, is equality for all an attainable goal? (TMJCJ2MYE2019)

In 'To Kill A Mockingbird' by Harper Lee, the author explores the systematic discrimination of the Black community, elucidating the prejudice and inequality that may very much take place in our societies today. As the novel suggests, inequality remains a pertinent and rampant issue that is increasingly taking center-stage today. This begs the question: do disadvantaged groups truly deserve equal treatment? In our modern context, equality stands for all groups, regardless of any special circumstances, being granted equal opportunities. Despite measures to eradicate inequality gaining momentum worldwide, equality for all is ultimately an unattainable goal given the long-drawn, complicated nature of equality, or rather the lack there-of.

Equality for all firstly is idealistic and unrealistic fundamentally because of the complex and multifaceted nature of inequality, thereby making it highly difficult to minimise, let alone eradicate. Given any type of inequality, the way in which it materialises in society varies due to different causes, circumstances and the extent to which it is applicable to a specific country. Causes themselves are vastly affected by many different factors that are unique to society that the inequality takes place in, making it an elaborate and almost ceaseless cause to try and eradicate. For example, in developed nations like Singapore and Japan, gender inequality is deemed as a 'soft war' against women, whereby they are unable to break through glass ceilings due to their inherently more nurturing traits being seen as less valuable in the workforce. In contrast, in developing nations like Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, women are still held firmly to the conservative belief of being mere commodities, set in their fate to be married off for they are seen as extra mouths to feed. The exact same type of inequality here playing out in drastically different contexts further enunciates how in our diverse world, equality becomes idealistic and far-fetched. Any solutions therefore must be highly extensive and elaborate in order to truly eliminate inequality,

which will be costly due to its large scale. Thus, equality is not an attainable goal given the intricate and deeply complicated nature of it.

Prejudiced and disadvantaged groups will continue to be treated unequally due to the historical and cultural roots in which a multitude of inequalities stem from. This causes prejudices and unequal treatment to continue perpetuating itself generation after generation, for it is deeply ingrained and believed by society despite the untrue and discriminatory labels. This makes the idea of equality a long-drawn and extensive process, exacerbated by the fact that such inequalities only get more and more normalised as decades pass. Though supposedly ended in 1994 when Nelson Mandela came into power, the previous apartheid practice involving systematic discrimination still persists in South African society. Townships like Cape Town still house predominantly Black communities, alongside affirmative action in education favouring white children, all of which took root decades prior when colonial rulers still controlled the land. This elucidates how the deep historical and cultural notions of inequalities cause such prejudices to perpetuate themselves, making equal treatment almost unimaginable and unfortunately not attainable. Hence, equality is ultimately rendered an unattainable pursuit in the eyes of extensive histories and cultural beliefs inflicted upon certain groups.

Ideals of equality are difficult to even instill because the prejudiced or groups discriminated against sometimes choose to conform and adhere to discriminatory notions despite them being untrue. This herd mentality ensues primarily because individuals feel the need to fit in with their peers, causing them to resist their natural differences simply for social acceptance. This prevents equality from truly taking shape as people themselves refuse to confront and come to terms with their differences. As the LGBTQ community is gaining traction in recent years, this has cultivated a 'coming-out' culture whereby individuals declare their sexuality publicly to 'come out of the closet'. The notion of having to escape and reveal one's sexual preferences already indicates how many LGBTQ individuals have chosen to simply conform to the norms of a largely heterosexual society for fear of being treated unequally for something they cannot alter. This bleak reality still remains constant for many other groups like the transgender community, despite being part of the movement too. This sheds light on the truth that while people ought to embrace their innate differences and seek equality, it is an uphill battle to gain social acceptance, thereby deeming equality as unattainable.

Optimists will argue that increasing awareness about inequalities have allowed for greater progress towards eventual equality. With more attention on how disadvantaged or prejudiced groups are treated unequally, this has heralded the way for greater change and eventual equality for all. To exemplify, the Muslim Diaspora Initiative desires to spread awareness and understanding of Muslim communities in America, while actively raising funds to provide support for these groups of people. This reveals how even in the midst of rampant discrimination, there is a light at the end of the tunnel for equality to ultimately be attainable. While it may be hopeful, it must be remembered that there are still many that deliberately hold staunch discriminatory beliefs in order to maintain a sense of superiority over prejudiced and often smaller groups. This causes inequality to remain resilient as people choose to be stubborn and hold unrelenting views that are often of the past or simply unfair towards such groups. Despite efforts to promote equality, there is still deliberate action taken to implement anti-Sharia laws taking place in a growing number of American states. This reduces the goal of equality to be a hefty and extensive effort to actually attain it. As such, as inequality chooses to persist due to stubborn beliefs, equality will never truly have a place in today's world.

Detractors will also argue that there is growing political will to eradicate inequalities due to the destabilising effect discrimination has on society. However, these efforts are often rendered pointless and ineffective as they fail to be implemented properly, or the masses are not receptive to them. In Japan, Abenomics sought to harness and expand the untapped potential of women and elderly, putting them at the forefront of economic prosperity. However, the policy failed to do precisely that, rather letting unemployment rates remain while deflation and a stagnant economy took its place. Despite awareness of an increasing need to harness these groups due to plateauing birth rates, the country failed to exercise its political will well. This highlights how even when there is a will, the way is often rocky and fraught with uncertainty to truly be navigated successfully. Hence, equality will remain an unattainable goal, despite the desires to eliminate it.

All in all, equality for all is not an attainable goal for it is barricaded by the historical roots and foundationally complex nature of inequalities. It is my hope that people will become more open-minded and empathetic, seeking to eliminate inequality for fair and equal opportunities to level out the playing field for all. As Harper Lee nicely put in 'To Kill A Mockingbird', one will never understand the dichotomies and disparities in society until we put ourselves in the skin of prejudice's victims and walk a mile in their shoes.

Ng Jing Wen Amelia 18A301

Remarks: A good attempt overall, with valid arguments, some of which are well argued and insightful. Good range of apt examples cited. Good control of language, with variety in vocabulary and sentence structure. Some examples however could have been better explained to show clearer links to the arguments raised. The second opposing viewpoint could have also been further developed.

Q5: 'Too little, too late.' Is this true of environmental conservation efforts today? (TMJCJ2MYE2019)

With increasing global temperatures, rising sea levels and the loss of biodiversity, climate change has never been as threatening as it is today. News that countries like the Maldives and Vanuatu might sink is striking fear into the hearts of people and they are crying out for action. This has brought about a wave of both domestic and international action to thwart climate change. However, I believe that these efforts will never be truly effective due to the simple fact that all we are doing is playing catch up and Mother Nature is simply too far gone to save. Despite developments in technology and the rise of environmental activism, these efforts take too much time to bear their fruits. In addition, the very fact that it took us too long to start putting in effort has resulted in climate change being irreversible, and that is the very sad truth. Like the proverbial saying goes, we are doing too little, too late.

Firstly, environmental conservation efforts are too little, too late as the effects of climate change are irreversible. We just simply started too late. Years and years of rapid globalisation and tremendous industrialisation has taken a toll on the Earth and the damages are now beyond repair. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has recently announced that 60% of the Earth's biodiversity is lost. This, coupled with scorching hot summers in Western Europe reaching 40°Celsius, has cemented this fact. It is simply impossible to cool down global temperatures with the current environmental conservation efforts. In addition, Man is not able to bring extinct species

back to life. The very existence of climate change and global warming is pushing even more species towards extinction. If we had begun to care about the environment 10 years earlier, the effects of climate change would not be as drastic as it is now. Unfortunately, our predecessors were too blinded by the goals of economic growth to notice the blaring warning signs all around them. Sadly, our efforts are too little, too late.

Apart from that, these conservation efforts take a long time for them to bear fruit. While waiting for these efforts to work, Mother Nature is slowly marching further and further away from us. One such example is the Kyoto Protocol that was launched in 1997. Once viewed as a silver lining amidst a sky of dark clouds, the Kyoto Protocol was created with the goal to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Targets were set for each participating nation to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 5% of what it was in 1990 with the deadline set at 2012. This 15 years wait allowed many countries to take their time and continue with the status quo. While there were successes like countries such as Finland meeting their targets, even more countries like Spain failed to meet their targets, with some like Australia even increasing their emissions upon the commencement of the agreement. Unfortunately, despite the Kyoto Protocol having good intentions, the far away deadline allowed many of its participants to be complacent and take their time. I believe that with a closer deadline there would have been a greater sense of urgency and the agreement would have been more effective. Another example is the formation of the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) in Singapore. Established in 2007, it rated buildings on how environmentally friendly they were. However, this was only done after Singapore's rapid construction of high-rise apartments and business infrastructure. BCA failed to encourage green buildings, with the number of green buildings only increasing by 23% while leaving thousands of buildings as they were. Unfortunately, the majority of these efforts could only be helpful in the long run while allowing climate change to continue its rampage.

There are some, however, who are optimistic. They believe that the developments in technology can make a difference in the world's conservation efforts. The rise of clean energy in the form of geothermal energy, solar energy, wind energy and others is starting to sustain a larger percentage of countries' energy supply. Australia's wind turbines and solar panels for example, have been able to power 40% of the massive country's electricity. The increasing reliance on clean energy reduces the staggering impact of coal combustion. However, this only applies to affluent countries. Less developed countries are unable to afford the same technology. Furthermore, developed countries are also unwilling to provide aid to these nations to help them move towards a cleaner source of energy. Apart from that, the development of new technology is a long and difficult process, requiring years and years of trial and error for something that might never come to fruition. This shows that while technology might be able to alleviate some of Mother Nature's burdens, creating the said technology takes a long time and is expensive, and countries are doing too little to help others.

Secondly, others have also laid claim to how the increased awareness regarding environmental conservation has allowed it to gain traction in society. This has resulted in companies such as major Australian airline Qantas to strive to be more environmentally friendly. In May 2019, Qantas launched a 'no waste' test flight. Things from cutlery to straws and plates are now made from recyclable materials and are biodegradable. Apart from that, fast food chains like Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) have stopped providing straws in their Singaporean outlets to be more environmentally friendly. While this is promising, this is only happening in a few corporations. Many companies are still ignorant and do little to reduce their impact on climate change. This

results in the efforts of the companies being overshadowed by the overwhelming majority who refuse to do anything or who implement ineffective measures. For instance, merchants like Miniso have started charging for single use plastic bags and Fairprice offers small discounts for bringing your own Fairprice shopping bag. These efforts may not be very effective as majority of customers value their convenience and are willing to dish out a meagre amount of money to avoid bringing their own bags. While it may seem that the responsibility to take care of climate change falls on countries and large corporations, consumers have the same responsibility as well but are currently doing too little on their part. Ultimately, be it corporation or consumer, we are doing too little to combat climate change.

Everyone has their own interests. Countries look for economic growth and to ensure the welfare of their citizens. Businesses are fixated on profits. Individuals like you and I care about our own personal wants and desires. Unfortunately, many a time, these interests come at a price, and that price is the deterioration of our environment. Despite all these growing initiatives, I regret to say that I still do not believe they are enough. Many people might say that it is the combustion of coal that is causing global warming while others say it is consumerism. However, I believe it is neither of these things but mankind that is destroying the Earth. We have only begun to care when we start to feel the negative effects of climate change and until we can fix our hearts from thinking only about ourselves, we will be doomed to fall in our own hands. This said, I still have a glimmer of hope and I pray that it will not be too late.

Kristian Joy D. Deocampo 18S307

Remarks: A very consistent line of argument adopted throughout the essay. There is no doubt where you stand on the issue, despite the opposing view. You might also want to consider the role of NGOs in bringing about awareness and action.

**Q5: 'Too little, too late.' Is this true of environmental conservation efforts today?
(TMJCJ2MYE2019)**

Climate change. From ground- up protests like The Extinction Rebellion and Greta Thunberg's walk-outs, environmental conservation is on everyone's lips. However, is the sudden change in the conversation on climate change something that will lead to gainful leaps in the action against global warming or is this just lip service; too little too late to save the earth? I have, unfortunately come to the grim conclusion that yes, our paltry efforts in preserving the environment are largely too little and too late. From the growing amount of waste produced globally, the rise of meat consumption plus the ever-growing consumerism - all these events prelude the horrific and far reaching impacts of a dying planet; melting polar ice caps, mass die-offs, famines. We cannot save the environment if we continue enacting such measly initiatives to 'fight' climate change.

When we go about our daily lives, we seldom think about how much waste we dispose of. Straws, cups, plates and bottles all contribute to the growing mountain of waste filling up landfills worldwide. These plastic bottles, byproducts of our economy's hyper focus on 'hyperefficiency' have led to cheap, single use plastics that cut costs but kill the environment. Although some corporations have begun to take note of and scale back on the amount of waste produced, waste is quickly piling up in Singapore and around the world. The toxic waste polluting rivers, forests and slums throughout the world have resulted in over 60 varieties of fish in China becoming inedible because they contain too much mercury in their flesh. Singapore is complicit in this cycle of waste too. The only landfill Singapore has is set to fill up by 2035, ten years ahead of schedule.

This toxic waste is set to damage local wildlife and its surrounding ecosystems, for instance, when animals swallow plastic waste that they cannot digest and choke to death. If waste is allowed to leach into water bodies as have toxic and corrosive waste into China's lakes and rivers, it can lead to widespread pollution as water bodies transport toxic waste downstream into nearby wildlife habitats. As a result, China has tried to clean up its wildlife and the pollution in lakes. Despite that, China's hypocrisy is prevalent. It continuously allows its local corporations to dispose of toxic waste irresponsibly without harsh penalties - despite its appearance in public forums wherein it claims to be cleaning up its toxic waste. The situation in China is so dire that experts claim that even after 60 years, China's rivers would still be too polluted to swim in. Singapore fares no better despite its claims to reduce plastic waste in the Zero Waste campaign. When asked by 3 major corporations - Dairy Farm, Sheng Shiong and NTUC - to continue giving a 10 cent discount to customers who use their own grocery or plastic bags, the local ruling party People's Action Party declined the suggestion under claims of 'ineffectiveness'. It is no surprise that the local governments are known to have substantial holdings in local oil and gas companies that produce plastic goods. The grim reality is that if waste produced is disposed of inappropriately, serious harm can befall the local wildlife and ecosystems. Governments and local corporations may signal virtue and pay lip service to environmental conservation, but when it comes to taking serious action they often balk.

The surge in neoliberal capitalism has led to economic gains globally. Yet, neoliberalism's harms are numerous, especially where environmental conservation is concerned. Fiercely individualistic beliefs, such as growth at all costs, prioritise corporate growth over environmental conservation. Due to untrammelled capitalism, the results are devastating - we are expected to hit 2 degrees Celsius of global warming by 2100 and the amount of carbon dioxide released yearly is increasing at a staggering rate. As a result, we are rapidly killing off the environment and driving hundreds of thousands of species to extinction at a rapid pace. For instance, the monarch butterflies are dropping in numbers yearly due to rising temperatures. Due to melting polar ice caps, polar bears starve to death after being forced out of hibernation prematurely. The higher temperatures also cause crocodiles and other reptiles, which have temperature-dependent sex determination, to have a skewed sex ratio. The destruction of species at such a quick pace is said to have a cascading effect on local populations and the environment. Millions of poor farmers worldwide can expect lessened crop yields due to higher temperatures and the death of pollinators. Despite predictions that temperatures will creep up to 1.5 degrees Celsius in 12 years, many governments have continued to use coal for industrial purposes and embarked on oil drilling expeditions. Canada recently approved a fracking expedition set to mine even more crude oil, thus paying lip service to their recent investments in the clean energy sector. Even though America has only started to ramp up production of clean energy recently, like solar and wind, America is still relying much on fossil fuels, with Trump recently announcing his move towards 'clean coal' and increasing funding for fossil fuel research. Globally-speaking, this increase in fossil fuel production far overshadows the small increases in clean energy production and use. The following quote from a climate scientist in 2018 serves as a grim reminder of our future; she predicts that we cannot stall global warming unless we move away from such relentless pursuit of infinite growth. 'Due to the vested interests in fossil fuel and the oligarchic nature of global governments, it is statistically improbable that we can stall climate change in the next 12 years.' We are thus unlikely to reduce emissions sufficiently to meet the Paris Agreement targets, especially after the said big countries pulled out of the agreement due to the wealth and influence of corporations have over their governments. This means that environmental conservation efforts are unlikely to succeed quickly enough.

As many nations become more wealthy, meat consumption increases. An increase in meat consumption is statistically correlated with an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, especially

methane. Cattle farming is responsible for over 14% of greenhouse gas produced alone, with methane being the main culprit. Methane is much more dangerous than carbon dioxide, being able to trap more heat than carbon dioxide and dispersing slower than carbon dioxide. Governments, instead of focussing on ways to reduce meat consumption, have continued to subsidise meat production. America, Australia and Brazil all heavily subsidise beef and lamb production. Educational campaigns to get citizens to eat less meat have met with very limited success in the EU. Campaigners for a vegetarian diet, with the potential to cut emissions by nearly 10%, have only come about in recent years from organizations like PETA and are often mocked. Also, no subsidies have currently been levied on vegetarian foods. As a result, meat consumption is unlikely to slow down, leading to an increase in methane produced and global warming. Neither governments nor organizations seem willing to effectively tackle the problem in due time.

My critics may argue that I am being dour and pessimistic. They say that many bottom-up initiatives like the Zero Waste movement and Extinction Rebellion protests leading to a declaration of a state of emergency related to climate change in the United Kingdom have proven effective. They claim that action is taken as corporations, individuals and governments are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of environmental conservation. For instance, they say that Nestle now only sells Fairtrade-approved chocolate after protests against their environmentally unfriendly production processes. Coca-Cola is now manufacturing recyclable plastic bottles. Norway recently balked at extracting nearly a billion barrels of oil in the name of environmental conservation. They say that change is slow and must happen gradually, that the environment will recover if we let individuals learn; that we can achieve a carbon zero economy with time. They also argue that governments have been doing enough. For instance, China has plans to take gas-powered cars off the road and introduce electric cars, while India is building more clean energy driven plants, which are signs that governments are listening and making large strides to combat climate change. However, the scale and timeframe that such climate change efforts are being implemented are found wanting. Even though corporations are taking steps to address climate change, 100 corporations (including Nestle) are still responsible for nearly 77% of all greenhouse gas released due to greenwashing. Many governments also continue to allow extraction of fossil fuel, like America and Australia. The efforts of a few small, rich countries cannot outcompete large scale, global economies. The rate of change is too slow, given how studies suggest that we now only have 12 years to act against climate change. Hence, it is untrue that our efforts are sufficient to stop climate change despite the lip service of corporations and governments who greenwash campaigns and initiatives while freely polluting the environment.

So what do we do now? Given the abject state of the environment and the apathy displayed by governments and corporations, should we just pull up a chair and watch the world burn? There is optimism yet. Although we will most likely exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming in the near future, a swift and focussed effort could keep it below 2 degrees Celsius. Through peaceful protests to force corporations and governments to switch to eco-friendly initiatives, we just still might be able to slow global warming.

Sidney Teo 18S304

Remarks: Strong personal voice evident throughout. A good range of apt examples cited, but perhaps some of the examples could have been developed more succinctly.

Qn 8: Consider the claim that science fiction is nothing more than trivial entertainment. (TMJCJ2MYE2019)

People have been fantasizing about the potential future for a very long time. In the 20th Century, the media set expectations of technology in the future by predicting the presence of flying cars and virtual reality. Although as of now, flying cars are still a thing of the future, the widespread use of virtual reality has actually crept itself into our daily lives. I believe that this was thanks to the inspiration from science fiction. Science fiction, or 'sci-fi' for short, comes in various forms of media, such as films, literature and games. Some may undervalue this genre of entertainment, claiming that the concepts presented in sci-fi may be too far fetched to provide anything substantial. However, I believe that sci-fi is more than just trivial entertainment as it inspires innovation in many fields of science and technology and it has created a whole culture around it, allowing people to socialise over their favourite works of science fiction.

One key point to my argument is the fact that works of science fiction have sparked new ideas in the real world. As I had mentioned, the constant drive to push towards virtual reality in the past allowed it to come to fruition in modern times. Although science fiction may not be the sole reason for most advances in modern science, it can be said that it is surely an influence. For example, the works of Isaac Asimov on robotics have influenced the way robots are being made today. His famous rules of robotics may even be needed as robots advance to more sophisticated levels. Furthermore, works such as 'Star Trek' have also been an influence in the area of space exploration. Many dream of flying through the vast expanse of outer space, especially after watching or reading of such adventures set in space. This demand has given rise to modern commercial flights to space, which may be coming very soon thanks to certain companies. SpaceX even considers taking humans to Mars, which would be the farthest mankind has ever gone into space. These show that inventions in the modern world certainly take at least some inspiration from their sci-fi counterparts. Hence, science fiction provides more than just trivial entertainment as it may even shape the future technology we may attain.

Another point supporting my stand is the fact that the genre of science fiction itself has made millions of dollars for the economy. On a more pragmatic side, it can be stated that science fiction as a genre of film and literature has provided a huge sum of revenue to the economy. Some works are even revered to be classics in the world of entertainment, further incentivising people to invest in sci-fi. For example, the movie 'Avatar' is a sci-fi film and is regarded as the highest grossing blockbuster hit ever, earning over a billion U.S. dollars. 'Steins;Gate' is another work of sci-fi in the form of a visual novel and is regarded as one of the best in that respect by many, showing how much fame and revenue it has generated. These show that science fiction is definitely a profitable market and can give rise to many jobs to produce such works. Overall, this helps benefit the economy of countries willing to invest in the genre. Thus, science fiction provides real world benefits through the economy, making it a substantial form of entertainment.

One other point buttressing my stand is the fact that sci-fi as a whole has amassed millions of fans. By creating a medium of discussion through works of science fiction, people are allowed to socialise and communicate with one another. This allows them to form relationships by talking about their favourite films or books. In today's world, it is even considered normal for conversations to be based around science fiction. The blockbuster franchise 'Star Wars' has garnered millions of fans over the years, and its modern continuation helps even more fans to enter the fandom. The franchise has become such a hit that until now, people are still discussing the films that were made decades ago. The famous MMORPG 'Warframe' also allows millions of players to interact with one another through the game's multiplayer system. A similar game named

'Destiny' also provides players with deep and rich lore, giving them points to discuss. This shows just how much science fiction has evolved as a genre. Thus, sci-fi certainly brings a lot more to the table as a form of entertainment as seen by the countless communities surrounding it.

Critics may argue that some concepts presented in science fiction may be too far fetched to really provide anything of value other than pure fun and entertainment. Ideas such as time travel have so many loopholes and paradoxes that people may even ridicule those who take such ideas seriously. Hence, it can be said that sci-fi is nothing more than trivial entertainment. Although I agree to some extent, I believe that the enjoyment of consuming such forms of entertainment alone is enough to make it worthwhile. For example, the creativity displayed in 'Doctor Who' is still enjoyable to watch despite the flaws in its premise of time travel. Thus, I believe that works of sci-fi are still meaningful to the audience themselves even if the concepts are unrealistic and flawed.

Another contentious point made by critics is the fact that sci-fi may just be another distraction from the things that really matter in life. Some believe that sci-fi, as with other forms of entertainment, detracts people from their responsibilities and such. However, I believe that if consumed moderately, works of sci-fi can provide a breath of fresh air from an otherwise dull reality. This is because sci-fi generally sparks creativity in the viewers by portraying their fantasies for the future and what it may hold. Thus, I believe that sci-fi is a much needed form of escapism today as long as the consumption of it is controlled.

All in all, I believe that science fiction is a more substantiated and meaningful form of entertainment than others may think. Although sci-fi may be overconsumed and serve as a distraction and that it may be too ridiculous to take seriously, I still believe that the genre is meaningful to real world science and technology, the economy, and the modern culture. In the future, it may even be possible to finally get our hands on the much beloved flying cars. Until then, I hope that sci-fi continues to convey more marvelous ideas to strive for.

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Remarks: 'Trivial entertainment' is addressed, though not always adequately. Valid points and arguments raised, though there is some repetition of points in the rebuttals. Good range of valid examples from science fiction cited. Vocabulary and sentence structure used is quite complex, with hints of personal voice.