



RAFFLES INSTITUTION
2017 Year 6 Term 3 Common Test
Higher 2

Knowledge and Inquiry

9759/02

Paper 2 Critical Thinking

29 June 2017

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Do not turn this sheet over until you are told to do so.
Write your name and CT group on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black ink.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid/tape.

SECTION A

Answer **Question 1**.

SECTION B

Answer any **two** questions.

At the end of the examination, fasten your answers to each section separately. You will be asked to submit your answer to each section separately.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

Section A

You **must** answer Question 1.

1 How exactly is art valuable?

There are those who argue that the value of art depends on its representation of reality, for it reliably portrays what is going on. Others argue that mere mimesis is insufficient; the emotional and mental states of individuals or the responses we have about the sublime cannot be represented in paintings that merely take a 'snapshot' of what people commonly see – landscapes, seascapes, portraits, or even bowls of fruit. Isn't the function of art, they claim, to get people to think about life at a deeper level or to highlight issues or areas of concern that we, as a society, should focus more attention on?

Even if the value of art does not depend on representing reality accurately, we might say that art is in some way *about* reality if it conveys some kind of 'knowledge' or 'truth'. For example, Picasso's *Guernica* shows us the horror and awfulness of war. This is the 'message' that people come away with. Grünewald's *The Crucifixion* has a huge symbolic meaning in the Christian understanding of God, human life and our place in the universe. Grünewald is not simply evoking sorrow and anguish, but a religious message as well. What an artwork informs us of, then, is a vision of the world – some knowledge or truth expressed in a deeper way than reality can.

What do we mean of the artist's vision, and what does it inform us of? We can start by thinking about idealization. Palma Vecchio's *A Blonde Woman* is not a portrait of any particular woman, but an expression of the ideal woman, or the ideal of 'woman' – as Palma Vecchio imagines it. Many Renaissance artists consciously sought to represent what was ideal – indeed, this is how art conveys truth. That something is ideal is an expression of human judgment. So understanding something as an expression of an ideal contributes to self-understanding. Or, an ideal may illuminate our experience, e.g. by operating as a standard against which we measure experience.

A different way art may express 'truth' is through the attention it pays to the ordinary. 'Look', a painting can say; look at how individual, how unique objects that we take for granted really are. This intensity of vision is found in Van Gogh's work, such as Van Gogh's *Chair*. The artist sees what we overlook in everyday life, and expresses the truth that everything is precisely itself and nothing else, to be valued for its unique existence.

We can object that not all art expresses a vision or truth or even tries to. It is difficult to say of much music that it expresses a vision, rather than simply emotion. And there is art that is made simply to be enjoyed, and nothing more. Examples include pleasant, entertaining music and artefacts such as vases and rugs.

Second, focusing on how we are informed by art makes our appreciation of art too intellectual. We would always need to get the resemblance, the allusion, the message, the vision. In response, we can say that the vision of the artist is valuable not just for the 'truth' it reveals, but also for its expressive, emotional qualities.

Third, the idea of vision – particularly if we say that the vision develops as the artwork is created – does not always involve an understanding of how the world is already. We are therefore not learning something about the world independently of what is being expressed in the artwork. There is not always a message to take away into life more generally. In many cases, the vision is there just to be enjoyed and contemplated. 'Information', then, is the wrong model.

Finally, emphasising information also misses what is distinctive about art as art. A work of theology can express a religious view of the crucifixion. But it is not art and is not valued as art. So it is the expressive qualities – both how the vision is expressed and the emotional qualities of the vision – that we value in art. The vision must move us, and it is being moved that is part of what we value. It is precisely because art can convey a vision that makes it so valuable.

Adapted from *Art and Truth: 'Good art should illuminate our experience or reveal 'truths''*
by MICHAEL LACEWING

Analyse and evaluate the above argument on what the value of art is with reference to the nature and construction of knowledge in aesthetics and/or art. Respond with your own critical comments to support or challenge the author's position. [30]

Section B

Answer **two** questions.

- 2** It may come as a surprise that, in buying a seasonal pie ingredient, you might be participating in a carefully designed social-science experiment. But this is what online comparison shopping hath wrought. Simply put: Our ability to know the price of anything, anytime, anywhere, has given us, the consumers, so much power that retailers—in a desperate effort to regain the upper hand, or at least avoid extinction—are now staring back through the screen. They are comparison shopping *us*, through the immense data trail we leave behind whenever we place something in our online shopping cart or swipe our rewards card at a store register. But should firms be allowed to experiment on us on such a large scale?

The price of a product should be fixed, since the true cost of its production, be it the cost of manufacturing, labour, transport, or overheads, is known. Anything extra is pure profit. But Amazon's price of pumpkin-pie spice can vary between \$4.49 and \$8.99 depending on when you looked – the closer to Christmas, the higher the price. This is clearly profiteering, since people are most vulnerable when they want to make good on their promise to bring pumpkin pie to a Christmas party.

Besides, setting a fixed price, enacted in the 19th Century, was the cessation of the perpetual state of hostility, known as haggling, between buyer and seller. The enactment stopped everyday haggling at the market, and life proceeded much more peacefully, to the delight of both sides. It made things fairer, and made us more humane. We should need to spend our time constantly checking the price of everyday items like pepper and salt just because some Economist can analyse big data to earn the Amazon more money during holiday seasons while the rest of us languish at our desks in hope that we aren't getting ripped off.

Critically assess the reasoning in this argument, explaining why you do or do not accept its conclusion or conclusion. [15]

- 3** People used to argue that we needed to explore space to find a suitable alternative planet for humankind to live on, after Earth is destroyed. But science has pretty much dashed this hope, as the nearest hospitable planet is 12 light years away. Even if we found a planet nearer to Earth, the chances of it being hospitable to Earth's current lifeforms are one in a billion.

In addition to space exploration giving us no direct benefit, the resources and efforts put into space research could better humanity in so many ways: from alleviating poverty to improving the standard of living in Third- and Second-World countries.

Of course, there are those who disagree, claiming that the only thing keeping humanity going is hope. And if we lose hope of finding a plausible alternative 'out there', then we might as well not be human. As it is, three, or even five, planet Earths aren't enough to keep up with our current lifestyles; it is clear that Earth is doomed to be destroyed quicker than we imagined.

But this is exactly the point: it is because there currently exists only an imagined, hypothetical hope that we aren't focusing on what is more important – saving Earth. Just imagine how much we could accomplish, as a species, if we redirected all resources and efforts from space exploration to tackling global poverty, hunger, and inequality. We also wouldn't always need to debate the Space budget or discuss how much foreign aid to offer poorer countries every year since many of these debates would naturally be resolved.

Critically assess the reasoning in this argument, explaining why you do or do not accept its conclusion or conclusions. [15]

- 4 Since the body of Aylan Kurdi, a 3-year old Syrian migrant, washed up on a Turkish beach in September 2015, aid agencies have been working doubly hard to prevent the next Aylan from drowning. Coast guard patrols and humanitarian rescue operations have increased, and more food and essential supplies have been distributed to refugee camps to help refugees survive, in an attempt to discourage them from attempting the treacherous sea routes to get to Europe.

But sending supplies to refugee camps only enables refugees to stock up before attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, and increasing coast guard patrols only gets more refugees caught and then repatriated. And while humanitarian rescue operations may prevent more drowning, they do not fix the root cause of the problem.

I say we can do more, with the help of technology. New apps can help refugees gather crucial information to help them plan their road ahead: the most dangerous routes to avoid, what's happening at the border, and which European countries are currently taking in refugees. Apps can also help with basic survival skills: which water is safe to drink, how to dress a minor wound, and pictures illustrating proper hygiene practices. Yet other apps can help people translate foreign languages, reconnect with lost relatives, and even establish legal identities in new countries through basic documentation. These measures are far more effective at preventing the death toll from climbing.

The prevailing fear that new technologies will aid terrorism needs to be checked; the benefits of rolling out new technologies to save more lives clearly outweigh the low possibility of terrorists using the same technologies to plan their next attack.

Critically assess the reasoning in this argument, explaining why you do or do not accept its conclusion or conclusions. [15]

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