

# NAVIGATE

Issue #3

Eunoia Junior College  
English Department  
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2018 JC1  
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# Message from the 2018 JC1 GP Team

Dear Eunoians,

*“Classic writing, with its assumption of equality between writer and reader, makes the reader feel like a genius. Bad writing makes the reader feel like a dunce.”*

— Steven Pinker, *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*

Writing, like the English language with all its eccentricities, may seem like a mystery waiting to be unraveled. Yet, learning to write well must first begin with a few assumptions:

That good writing is hard to begin with. There is no short cut.

That good writing is a journey of experimentation. It emerges from trials of alternating success and failure.

That good writing is meant not only for yourself but also your reader and thus the equality between writer and reader.

That good writing, unlike a Mathematical solution, is not replicable, for every new piece of writing differs from the preceding one and has tremendous potential to be better as well.

And we are glad that this collection of essays from the Promotional Examination 2018 has honoured the assumptions aforementioned. Yes, some of you struggled with clarity at your first attempts to write a GP essay but your lucidity is clearly coming through. Some of you while indubitably logical, were accused of not having a voice in your writing. Some of you were guilty of gratuitous writing which has now been replaced by a sense of purpose and conviction. We knew all along that slowly but surely, your growth would become apparent and it has been nothing short of inspirational.

As we present you the final issue of Navigate for 2018, we also look forward to ushering in a new year's worth of good writing. In the year ahead, like the click of a refresh button, we would like to see the names of new contributors and not just a select few. And finally, we hope that the Navigate issues continue to provide you with good leverage to become better articulators of thought through writing.

All the best,  
Your GP Teachers ♥♥

# Essays: 2018 Timed Practice 2

## In response to GCE A Level 2013 Paper 1

- 1 'The world would be a better place if more political leaders were women.' What is your view?
  - Not represented
- 2 'Unlike the Arts, such as writing or music, Mathematics lacks the capacity for creativity.' How far do you agree with this statement?
  - Jared Chong (18-U4), full essay
- 3 Is there any point in trying to predict future trends?
  - Not represented
- 4 To what extent is it possible 'to make the punishment fit the crime'?
  - Not represented
- 5 Discuss the claim that in the modern world people should care more about international than national issues.
  - Not represented
- 6 How important is it to save plant and animal species which are in danger of extinction?
  - Not represented
- 7 'Scientific research into health and diet is unreliable as it so often contradicts itself.' Is this a fair comment?
  - Not represented
- 8 How far is increased prosperity for all a realistic goal in your society?
  - Not represented
- 9 Consider the view that spoken language is more important than the written form.
  - Not represented
- 10 Why should we be concerned with current affairs when most of them will soon be forgotten?
  - Christabelle Kam (18-I2), full essay
- 11 'Education should only be concerned with what is useful in life.' Discuss.
  - Cheryl Yong (18-A4), full essay
  - Lim Mingzhe (18-U4), 1 paragraph
- 12 How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion?
  - Tang Shih Ern (18-A4), full essay
  - Koh Rui Yi (18-A4), 1 paragraph

**2 'Unlike the Arts, such as writing or music, Mathematics lacks the capacity for creativity.' How far do you agree with this statement?**

*This essay's strength lies in the student's vast knowledge of not just one of the topics at hand, but both Mathematics and the Arts. This allowed the use of a wide range of applicable examples and valid explanations regarding those examples. The level of insight achieved through the essay could be improved by a stronger attempt to unpack the purposes of 'the Arts' and 'Mathematics' and by pointing out the false dichotomy between Mathematics and the Arts (i.e. why they are not mutually exclusive) and considering how they could possibly work hand-in-hand.*

The whole reason for the existence of the Arts is for freedom of expression to create whatever an individual may desire. From the dark and tragic poems of Sylvia Plath to the emotion[-]filled tension of Brahms's music, it is not an understatement to say that the Arts is bright and brimming with culture and talented individuals. That being said, many individuals at first glance may not consider Mathematics to have any capacity for creativity, some going as far as saying Mathematics alienates creativity and freedom of expression all together. However, this is certainly not the case. Therefore, I agree with the statement that 'Unlike the Arts, such as writing or music, Mathematics lacks the capacity for creativity' to a small extent as although Mathematics may appear repetitive and boring to some individuals, it also requires people to think outside the box to solve complex solutions and is ever present in our environment.

The concept of Mathematics could be unpacked further, similarly to how it was done for the Arts

Firstly, Mathematics often requires people to think laterally and come up with clever solutions to solve problems. Mathematic genius[es], such as that of Bernoulli or Fermat, were no strangers when it came to creative problem solving. Examples, such as Bernoulli using the properties of light to find the path of least resistance between two paths in space[, or] Fermat's last theorem being solved through the creation of new notations, no doubt have hints of cleverness and out-of-the-box thinking throughout their solutions. Similar to music, where the problem of equal temperament was solved by making all the keys of the instrument slightly out of tune, Mathematics has its own hints of creativity in the people who come up with solutions to hard or unsolved problems in Mathematics. Though some individuals may hold the belief that Mathematics is boring and repetitive, possibly due to them not having any insight[] about the subject at hand, I believe that this is not the case as it is through using these same symbols and abstract concepts of numbers and theories that we are able to solve complex abstract problems concerning the subject, such as if there are infinitely many prime numbers. Thus, I agree with the statement to a small extent as Mathematics deems it necessary for individuals to think laterally in order to solve problems.

Topic sentence could be clearer in terms of addressing the thesis statement and question

Secondly, I agree with the statement to a small extent as Mathematics is an art form in itself. In certain areas of Mathematics, the creation and recognition of patterns, such as fractals and number patterns, is definitely a sign of creativity. The [Menger sponge], for example, where you take smaller and smaller areas of a square out of a unit square, is a figure that, paradoxically, has zero area but an infinite perimeter as the procession continues to infinity. [The] Fibonacci [] sequence, a pattern where the previous two numbers are added to produce the third, is oddly related to the golden ratio, and subsequently related to how flowers spread their petals and seeds to become efficient. Through these examples, it is understandably clear that Mathematics does indeed hold a capacity for being an art form in [and] of itself, through its regular appearances of fractals in coastlines, rivers or clouds. Through nature's chaotic randomness, consistently recurring patterns still somehow manage to sneak into our everyday surroundings, brought about by the irregular happenings of [M]other [N]ature. Thus, I agree with the statement to a small extent as through certain parts of Mathematics, it can be seen as an art form.

The argument that Mathematics is an art form could be greater linked to the concept of creativity

The link to creativity - how can these be appreciated/ channelled - can be made clearer

<p>Lastly, while I do concede that Mathematics has its limitations in terms of ways to freely express oneself, such is the case for other art forms [as well, like] writing or music, where limitations can create pathways to creativity. Orson Wells was once quoted [] saying[,] “The absence of limitations is the enemy of Art.” This is the case for many musicians, composers and artists in history. Shostakovich for example, a Russian composer who lived during [the time of] the Soviet Union, wrote a fugue in perfect harmony, where there were no pockets of dissonance anywhere. Other composers write piano pieces and sonatas [with] only a single hand, some even wrote classical violin pieces by only using open strings. Though unconventional, the induction of limitations into one’s expressions can [in fact] incite creativity. Similarly with Mathematics, though it has its own limitations in terms of numbers, [it] is not to say [that] it has very little creativity, [rather, it is the contrary]. Take for example the [artwork] of M. C. Escher. While his artwork[] mainly consisted of perspective illusions, he also dabbled in the field of tessellations, where the same shape is tessellated [repeatedly] without the formation of gaps. Despite this limitation, Escher was able to produce tessellations of animals, such as horses, lizards and birds even though he was using the same shape repeatedly, showing that limitations in Mathematics do not eliminate the process of creativity, but rather, enhance it. Thus, although Mathematics may be limited in its scope, it definitely has the capacity for creativity through its own limitations.</p>	<p>Good point, but could explain how and why Mathematics and the Arts are not mutually exclusive</p>
<p>In conclusion, I agree with the statement that ‘Unlike the Arts, such as writing or music, Mathematics lacks the capacity for creativity’ to a small extent[,] as it often requires the individual to think up [ingenious] and clever solutions to problem solving, [which in] itself its own art form[,] and while limited, is undoubtedly brimming with creative capacity. Mathematics contains intrinsic beauty hidden throughout its logical structure[], whether or not we want to see its creative insight [] is up to us.</p> <p><i>(Jared Chong, 18-U4)</i></p>	

## 10 Why should we be concerned with current affairs when most of them will soon be forgotten?

*This essay quite eloquently maintains a clear focus on the question, consistently providing a wide range of examples that are both interesting and relevant, to support the arguments presented. While it is an insightful piece, a stronger and more direct thesis statement and stand would have allowed for a clearer introduction and more organised flow of arguments in general.*

Current affairs are everywhere. We read about it on newspapers, we listen about it on the radio, we discuss it over [our] day-to-day observations[;] it is ubiquitous. Such affairs often refer to news of what is happening around us, from the Straits Times news report introducing parking fees for civil servants in school[s], to the international media reporting on the Trump-Kim summit, current affairs vary in scale – local, to regional, to global – and place. As we read about the daily happenings of our world, current affairs are constantly refreshing themselves, excited to show off the latest news. It becomes easy for the current affairs of yesterday to be drowned out or set aside by those of today, especially in the dynamic world we live in. Despite this, we should still persist to be concerned about current affairs. Whilst some are seemingly insignificant and easily forgotten, offering no value to our lives, it is important to dig beneath the surface, for current affairs teach us lessons that form an intrinsic part of our identity, that increase[s] awareness about different cultures, and allow us to build tomorrow based off the happenings of today.

Thesis statement could be clearer and more specific

Some have said that certain current affairs are only important today, and are easily forgettable for they do not enrich, nor add value to our lives. Superficial news, such as the latest trends and fads, or the descriptive reports of the ideal celebrity diet, form a small part of current affairs, and may seem insignificant, soon to be forgotten. For example, tabloid companies such as the Daily Mail and Hollywood news centre their current affairs [on] the minute details of celebrity lives, from Kim Kardashian's latest fragrance[,] to Ariana Grande's engagement. Such superficial affairs, while current, are also seen by some to be completely irrelevant and repetitive. The saturation of tabloids with such news makes them a turn[-]off to certain people, making such current affairs even more forgettable, for they do not impact the lives of the majority and therefore do not deserve attention and concern. However, it is important to note that while such current affairs may seem shallow and superficial compared to international issues such as violence and conflict, their value is not to be discounted. They offer insight into human behaviour, for we shape today's current affairs. From Kim Kardashian's fragrance, we realise the benefits of influence and money. From Ariana Grande's engagement, we deduce the struggle of trying to maintain a private life in the public eye. While the affairs themselves are forgotten, the emotions and insights they evoke in us are not. The study of such human behaviour forms a part of our subconscious, which shapes our [mind-set] and actions. Therefore, seemingly superficial current affairs can hide great value, and it is up to the individual to go beneath the surface to discover more. Current affairs hold no value when people determine that it holds no value, for the insight we glean from today's news [is] shaped mainly by our own individual interest. Hence, it is only when we do not believe in the value of today's events that we become unconcerned about them.

Acknowledges the reasons for the notion that current affairs 'will soon be forgotten'

Use of an interesting example that is well explained, and illustrates effectively the value from what is usually considered superficial - relevant and demonstrates awareness of the question requirements

[Furthermore], we should be concerned with current affairs as they teach us lessons not to be forgotten. The easily forgettable current affair can leave unforgettable marks on our [mind-set]. The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar will probably be only a speck of our memories [fifty] years down the road, but the lessons we learn from it will subtly shape who we are, and form an intrinsic part of our actions. The suffering and the pain of the refugees involved, and the sympathy it evoked in us will remind us not to take what we have for granted. The controversy around Myanmar's [State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi], a Nobel Peace Prize

Valid argument, although it could be further explained why we may forget something as eventful as this



<p>winner who merely stood aside and watched the action unfold, will leave an indelible mark on the rest of the world, changing our impression of someone once seen as compassionate and courageous. In this circumstance, while the event itself [may be] forgotten, the lessons learnt from it – proper management of refugees and the importance of good governance – are not. It often becomes evident that current affairs deserves our utmost attention, for we may forget them, but they will inevitably shape the global outlook, by leaving behind scars of the past, to serve as a reminder to always be learning. When current affairs become the news of the past, it is important we learn from yesterday, not to repeat the mistakes of our predecessors, and to replicate the triumphs of the past. These are lessons that current affairs play a role in teaching, and it is pertinent that their value not be underestimated, for it may lead to a world that is repetitive and cold, never learning from the current affairs of the past. Therefore, even though current affairs can be forgotten, their value lies in the lessons we gain from them, and that deserves our attention.</p>	<p>A limitation in this argument is that we need to act on certain issues today as well, not just ‘remember’ them. The connection between knowledge and action could be explored further</p>
<p>Additionally, current affairs often build upon, or reinforce, our identity and culture, and therefore remain significant even when they lose their ‘current’ aspect. The reporting of current affairs increases awareness about different cultures and their way[s] of life, therefore forming the basis of our beliefs and values, and helping to shape a common identity. Current events are akin to a pen, for they write the narrative of a country, and when that pen has lost its relevance, the story it wrote will always live on. In Singapore, racial harmony forms the backdrop of our narrative, and current affairs reinforces this belief. The Amos Yee incident anchored by racial and religious slander, the report of a woman who received public backlash after complaining about the noise of a Malay wedding online, these are all current affairs that remind us not to disrupt the racial balance. These events form the building blocks of racial harmony and unity, “regardless of race, language or religion,” as recited in the Singapore pledge. In 1964, the current affairs of that part of our past [wrote] a story of violence and conflict due to racial disagreement, and the current affairs of those times have cemented the culture of [the] racial harmony we enforce today. Therefore, while such events may be forgotten, or no longer relevant in today’s context, they have reinforced the fundamental identity behind the actions of today, leading to harsh sentences for racial slur, increased inter-racial dialogues and a multitude of peace-maintaining strategies, which are from the culture built upon the affairs of the past. Hence, it remains important that we keep up with current affairs, so as to strengthen our culture and shared identity, and to prevent anyone from jeopardising it.</p>	<p>Argument is a little narrow as only Singapore is discussed, albeit in an eloquent manner. Could this possibly be applicable to other societies as well?</p>
<p>Lastly, we must remain concerned about current affairs despite them losing relevance, for the future is often built on the happenings of now. Current affairs can be replaced by even more current ones, but it is today [] that shapes what happens in the future. The Trump-Kim summit, a momentous occasion in history, serves as the building blocks of diplomacy, and is slowly narrowing the gap between North Korea and the United States of America, each going so far so as to open North Korea to the world. Therefore, it can be seen that current affairs shape what will happen in the future. While the future does hold a degree of unpredictability, and the path laid out today may change its direction tomorrow, it is important to maintain foresight and build a vision of the [ideologies] of the future, and this is best achieved by the events of today. It then remains invaluable that we be knowledgeable about current affairs, for whether or not we forget them, they prepare us for the future, spearheading us down a path we remain uncertain on, allowing us to maintain relevance in an ever-changing world, where change is heavily influenced by the events of today. Hence, current affairs remain significant, for the future is built now, and regardless of whether or not we forget today, it still prepares us for tomorrow.</p>	<p>Example could have been developed further to show why this was of importance</p> <p>More relevance in this argument as it addresses the impact of current affairs</p>
<p>In conclusion, while some current affairs may seem insignificant, they do hold value, for they teach us lessons, preparing us for the future and aiding in the shaping of our culture and</p>	

shared identity. While we may forget the events of today, we do not forget the insights we gain from them, we do not forget the culture and narrative they leave behind, and they allow us to prepare for a future that would be otherwise uncertain.

*(Christabelle Kam, 18-12)*

**11 'Education should only be concerned with what is useful in life.' Discuss.**

*This essay displays an excellent demarcation of key terms – the different context of societies and their education systems are defined, as well as the subjective nature of education and its functions. However, more insights can be gleaned from examining the obligations and limitations of the education system in a developed setting, and evaluate how the current system is a compromise of sorts.*

Tests, examinations, mountains of homework – this is what usually comes to mind when talking about education. However, education is more than that. It is the process of taking in knowledge, understanding anything and everything in and out of this world. Education can be done by yourself, in groups at any age and any time. Education equips us with the knowledge to face the world and to deal with it, sustaining ourselves and our families physically, financially, and even emotionally. Some feel that education should only be concerned with what is useful in life, but in the turbulent 20<sup>th</sup> century, what is “useful”? Usefulness can only be considered when there is a purpose in mind, which is not limited to the idea of earning money. Hence, I feel that education should not only be concerned with what is deemed useful in life as priorities change, and what could be “useless” in one day could become “useful” in the next. Ever-changing priorities are characteristic of children and adults in developed countries, while less-developed countries have a large population of people below the poverty line, whose constant priority is basic survival.

The definition of ‘education’ has been broadened beyond the academic context, which will help provide a comprehensive response

The subjectivity of usefulness is pointed out

Introduction raises important ideas, but the flow of ideas can be improved

As children in developed countries, many are unaware of what they enjoy or what they want to pursue as adults. Hence, at this point of time, education should not only be concerned with what is useful in life. In kindergartens and primary schools, children are generally exposed to a wide range of activities, be it simple communication in various languages, art forms like crayons, origami, or dance, mathematics, science and more. To a child of a tender age, all of these may seem useless, as their priorities may be eating, sleeping, and playing, but to someone who would grow up to be a relations manager, effective communication is key. Hence, what is useful to these children is not yet established, hence the need for education systems with breadth, instead of zooming in on any particular field a child may or may not pursue in the future. In Singapore, primary education is compulsory for all as it equips everyone with the skills to make a decent living in our country. Attending secondary school is also highly encouraged and is subsidized for those unable to afford it. This signals the importance of a [holistic] education as primary and secondary subjects are generic, combined with other programs which teach other life skills. Though we may not ever apply the concept that the earth revolves around the sun or how to integrate and differentiate mathematical equations, all these create a culture of curiosity, self-directed learning and critical thinking, which are the ultimate aims of the Ministry of Education’s education model. The content may not be relevant to every student, but the skills of flexibility, processing, and applying a range of ideas are invaluable. Hence, for developed countries, their education system should not solely be on what is considered useful in life.

It is good practice to go beyond the basic requirements of the question – here, the student argues that usefulness is still a nebulous concept for the young. Some candidates may stop at this point to conclude that education is thus ineffective, but the argument is sustained here by extending the discussion to how it can still be useful

Beyond school, informal education also should not be concerned with the usefulness of the subject. Only when reading and learning widely can we discover and hence progress into a more efficient and happy society. Disruptive technology is a growing trend, turning “useless” items into business ideas and new innovations. For example, a social worker of the past would deem social skills as a key factor, but with the introduction of Smart Homes, technology once of little use is now one of utmost importance. Sensors and tracking technologies are used to monitor the elderly’s movements, especially for those living alone. This would allow social workers to ensure the health and safety of their charges, increasing the efficiency of their jobs. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, jobs are quickly appearing, merging and disappearing. With such rapidly changing needs of the working world, one can never

The features of informal education can be further elaborated on

<p>anticipate how something can shoot to fame or be rendered obsolete with the introduction of new technology and ideas. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that one has a range of skills and is constantly learning new things to stay ahead, preparing for inevitable change. Moreover, besides the idea of staying competitive in the working world, one's mental and emotional well-being is also important. Though it may not be useful in terms of value-adding to your job or income, learning about what you enjoy for fun is also a good way of distressing and achieving work-life balance. In the context of maintaining one's sanity, education about random small things you enjoy is also considered useful. Hence, I feel that education for adults should not be limited to what is useful in the practical sense, as anything can come into some use in the constantly-changing world.</p>	<p>This idea is significant enough to be explored in its own paragraph</p>
<p>However, in the context of less-developed countries and those living in poverty, education should be focused on what is materially useful to the people. With little knowledge of the world, people are unable to break out of the poverty cycle as they repeat the same mistakes and are unable to modernize. For these people, practicality and applicability of the content they learn is the most important. As these areas are often characterized by poor living conditions, no access to electricity or internet, and little resources for learning, it is imperative that the little they can learn is helpful towards the current situation. Examples include educating farmers on new technologies to increase the productivity of farms, birth control advice to poor couples who cannot support large families, or management of funds to prevent people from being cheated of their hard-earned money. All of these are basic needs of such communities to allow them to step out of the cycle of poverty, before further education can be done to integrate them into society. Thus, in such poor communities, any little education that can be done should only be what is useful to them. However, once this is successful, subsequent resources can be put into a more holistic education for the children of these communities, similar to those in developed countries, to give them a wide range of opportunities they can pursue when they grow up. In a globalized world, with less countries catching up with developed countries, the need for a more versatile workforce is common in all countries. Hence, once poverty has been eradicated, education would also need to expand to cover more areas to prepare a flexible and adaptable workforce.</p>	<p>The establishment of conditions to be fulfilled adds nuance to the essay, while considering the issue from the perspective of different types of societies</p>
<p>In conclusion, education should not only be concerned with what is useful in life. The usefulness of anything can change in our rapidly progressing world. Hence, there is a need for a broad-based education that one can benefit from presently and in the future, where once irrelevant skills can come in handy. As children grow up, adults progress through the workforce and people step out of a life of poverty, education needs to prepare them for ever-changing realities by dealing with a plethora of information that is useful and may become useful in future.</p> <p>(Cheryl Yong, 18-A4)</p>	

**11 'Education should only be concerned with what is useful in life.' Discuss.**

*This concluding paragraph offers a succinct overview of the thesis and the arguments made in the essay. By exploring the ideal intentions of education, the essay requirements are met and the call to action for education to surpass the functional demonstrates personal voice from the writer.*

To conclude, while it is important that education imparts to us the skills and abilities to survive (with the meaning differing depending on the context), we should not only limit it to that. For those who can afford the luxury, they should have education which explores beyond the necessary. Ultimately, the purpose of education is not just to ensure survival, but to bring out the best in each individual. Limiting ourselves to only the essential is stagnating, and it is without question that education should go above and beyond.

*(Lim Mingzhe, 18-U4)*

## 12 How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion?

*This essay presents a variety of clearly-argued points which are organised in a concise manner, leading to the overall argument being presented comprehensively. There is some semblance of an overall thesis, which argues that disruptions should be prevented as far as possible. However, the explanation of points can be more focused, as the response is underdeveloped at some places.*

In an Asian conservative society like Singapore, the government usually favours restricting freedom of expression rather than permitting it due to a multitude of reasons. Singapore is well-known for its shortcomings on freedom of expression. Alas, many citizens and organizations alike face difficulties in bringing out the beliefs and views and sharing them with the public. When it comes to views and opinions that are deemed unpopular, the government scrutinizes even more closely, and through means of censorship and restrictions, they prevent such views from being spread to the general population. Hence, the question of to what extent [] popular views [should] be open to discussion in our conservative society is put into debate. Would it be beneficial to the public, or detrimental? In my opinion, I posit to a large extent that unpopular views in my society should be held at bay, and preferably kept behind closed doors.

It is best to briefly explore these reasons, instead of leaving the reader to guess at them

The term “unpopular” is used to describe a subject of issue that is not well-received by the majority of people. In the context of expression, unpopular views refer to opinions held by a small group of individuals which are deemed to be socially disruptive, agitative, and illogical. These would be people that are unhappy with certain practices or policies implemented and carried out by both the government and the citizens, hence they voice out their views for a change in the entire system in order to improve their well-being. In the racially-dense metropolis that is Singapore, four primary races coexist in harmony by the legacy of past leaders in Singapore who believed strongly in racial harmony. Singapore is a role model to many countries in the aspect of multi-culturalism. However, to say that all Singaporeans, regardless of race and religion, coexist in absolute unity and harmony is an erroneous assumption. Although the majority of locals have adapted to living with people of different races, there are still a meagre number of individuals who are unhappy sharing their living space with people of other races. These individuals believe in the supremacy of their respective races, and often deem those of other races to be inferior and invasive, causing a great disturbance to the way of life. These people then take to the media to express their views about their unhappiness. One would logically agree that conflicts arise due to disagreements, hence when these people express their racial views on media platforms, chaos usually ensues when those of other races defend themselves. A very notable example in Singaporean context would be the Indian-Chinese curry conflict about a decade ago, when a Chinese national lamented about how the smell of the curry that his Indian neighbor was cooking was unpleasant; even atrocious. Many Singaporeans then stepped in to voice their views, with more of these people becoming more agitated the more they stepped into this [controversy]. This needless racial conflict is a key example to show why unpopular views in Singaporean should be kept at bay – if views on issues such as race and religion were more open to the public without any form of censorship, a myriad of racist views is likely to follow, and in the technologically-savvy twenty-first century, such views will spread like wildfire, bringing greater unrest and agitation to Singaporeans, and could potentially severely harm our multi-racial ties and way of life. Thus, it is my belief that unpopular views should not be open to discussion in areas such as race.

Definition of terms is a little mechanical, but the context is comprehensively unpacked

The repercussions of not censoring is well-detailed, and shows consideration for factors which may exacerbate the issue

Secondly, unpopular views should not be open to discussion in my society as it is imperative that the morals of the young in society are safeguarded. In the ever-changing and competitive modern world, it is extremely important that youths are raised with the right values so that they will have a firm moral compass to guide them to success in life. When unpopular views

Clearer explanation needed – highlight how youths are highly impressionable.

<p>are expressed to the public, there are many aspects of them that could cause the morals of young people who endorse them to go askew. Firstly, unpopular views tend to carry radical and insensitive sentiments such as racism and self-entitlement. Secondly, those who express unpopular views usually express them in strong, vulgar language. Should the young of the society endorse these views when exposed to them, the effects on their moral compasses will be detrimental, as they start to pick up the wrong values and beliefs. In the long run, these poor morals end up shaping a morally-askew individual that will consistently encounter problem after problem in life. As youths are the future of society and they carry the hopes and dreams of the entire nation, they need to be raised in a conducive environment that can teach them the right values to succeed in life and bring the nation to greater heights. Allowing unpopular views to be shared with the public, regardless of the extent, could interfere negatively with the growth of a young individual if they adopt the negative values embedded within such views. Thus, I believe that unpopular views should be kept behind closed doors and not be open for discussion.</p>	<p>Not unquestionably applicable to the issue at hand (morals)</p> <p>Can be elaborated further - limited links lead to a tenuous and shaky argument</p>
<p>On the other hand, one could also argue that more windows should be opened for unpopular views to be brought into the limelight. Singapore could well do with allowing more freedom of expression, even with unpopular views, as it could be beneficial to the country. By breaking the conservative chain, views and opinions of the marginalized in society can be brought to light, giving the government a better understanding on the lives of the individuals, allowing them to better help such people. Freedom of expression can be beneficial if the opinions are constructive, even if unpopular. However, due to government restrictions on freedom of expression, many of the marginalized groups continue to live within the shadows, with many of their problems not being made known to the greater population. According to CNN, Singapore ranks one hundred and fiftieth worldwide in terms of freedom of expression, a gloomy statistic that contradicts our first-world status. If the government can allow more freedom of expression in Singapore while simultaneously abolishing socially disruptive views, society will be able to progress as a whole given the government implements the correct policies and chooses the right course of action to address such unpopular views. Thus, to a certain extent, unpopular views should be open to discussion in my society.</p>	<p>Granting of freedom of speech is qualified – the condition that they must not be disruptive adds nuance to the argument</p>
<p>In a nutshell, allowing greater freedom of expression could be beneficial or detrimental, depending on those who have the power to control it. Singapore has progressed extremely well over the last half of the century, and its citizens have been able to coexist relatively harmoniously under one roof, thus earning the status of a first-world country. Should unpopular views be more open to discussion in society, the potential cons outweigh the benefits, as it could lead to a large disruption in our established peaceful way of life. It is of utmost importance that multi-racialism and peace is preserved in our society, thus I believe to a large extent that unpopular views should not be open to discussion in my society.</p> <p><i>(Tang Shih Ern, 18-A4)</i></p>	<p>Another dimension worth considering is the conditions that must be present for the fruitful discussion of unpopular views</p>

**12 How far, in your society, should unpopular views be open to discussion?**

*This paragraph does an excellent job of addressing a counter-argument, which aligns the paragraph with the overall thesis statement. By employing qualifying statements and adequately elaborating on them, while avoiding contradictory remarks, the student is able to display nuance in their argumentation.*

However, many may argue that if we do not discuss these unpopular views, we cannot better society. There must be logical reasons behind these views, and by taking the effort to uncover them, we can perhaps find some great flaw in society that has been overlooked. For example, in Singapore, although development is prized as a continuous improvement of our nation, it was the massive online movement about conserving Pulau Ubin that prevented the government from urbanising the island. Although the movement started out as a small debate, by people who were generally viewed as backwards and ‘tree huggers’ for trying to conserve the environment, their views and convincing discussions made the conservation of Pulau Ubin into an online movement, hence changing the government’s decision for the better. Hence there does seem to be some positive impacts from the discussion of unpopular views. However, it is worthwhile to note that mature discussions of unpopular views are rare in today’s age. The rapid spread of social media in Singapore has formed a digital ‘echo chamber’, where one person’s views are spread among the like-minded and everyone agrees. This has created an immature culture where instead of having varying viewpoints for an argument, all one hears are their own views echoed again and again. Hence, the ‘discussion’ becomes one-sided, and so do the people’s viewpoints. This makes society less accepting of unpopular views, making it difficult for such views to be open to discussion instead of being bashed.

(Koh Rui Yi, 18-A4)

Good perspective to take, which generates interesting arguments

By pointing out the way which discussions take place in today’s world, this qualifying statement provides a convincing explanation for its ineffectiveness



# Essays: 2018 JC1 Promotional Examinations

- 1 'In today's society, woman, not man, is the superior sex.' How far do you agree with this statement?
  - Not represented
- 2 How far can religious beliefs and scientific knowledge be reconciled?
  - Anna Oh (18-I5)
  - Alvina Lo (18-U5)
- 3 Does truth still matter in today's world?
  - Caitlin Chong (18-O2)
  - Tang Shih Ern (18-A4)
- 4 'Social media have given people the voice they need.' Do you agree?
  - Dason Yeo (18-A1)
- 5 Discuss the importance of food in your society.
  - Yeo Shin Loong (18-A1)
  - Faith Evangeline Seah (18-E2)
  - Ponghvoan Srey (18-U5)
  - Lew Kylin (18-U1)
  - Ma Guangheng (18-I5)
- 6 'There is no better time than the present to be alive.' Discuss.
  - Benjamin Chia (18-A4)
- 7 'Developed countries have the responsibility to accept refugees.' Do you agree?
  - Natthaphong (18-U4)
- 8 'History is only written by the victors.' How far do you agree with this statement?
  - Wang Yi Sheng (18-I2)
- 9 'Nature should always give way to the forces of urbanisation.' How true is this of your society?
  - Chelsea Leong (18-I3)
  - Cherilyn Lee (18-I1)
- 10 'The study of literature serves little purpose in society.' Discuss.
  - Claire Lim (18-I2)
  - Janessa Yik (18-E2)
- 11 'Some professions are more highly regarded than others.' Discuss this claim with reference to your society.
  - Teo Yee Shuen (18-A4)
  - Cham Jay Yin (18-U4)
- 12 'The best test of a civilised society is the way in which it treats its animals.' Discuss.
  - Lai Chee Yuen (18-I2)

## 2 How far can religious beliefs and scientific knowledge be reconciled?

*This essay takes a detailed look at the conflict between scientific thought and religious beliefs, focusing on the relationship between the two domains. In each paragraph, both areas are brought up and discussed knowledgeably with detailed examples. However, paragraphs towards the end had arguments which were not as well-developed, and felt rushed. Nonetheless, this was an informed attempt at a seemingly daunting topic.*

Since the dawn of human civilisation, religion has been an integral part of society. The ancients believed in a supernatural being or beings that had the power to control their destiny. Ancient Egyptians believed in the Sun God Ra and the Mother of Isis, alongside a plethora of other divine mystical beings each in charge of a different aspect of life. Hinduism and Buddhism, both originating from India, are two major religions of the modern world, together with Christianity which emerged in the following decades, all of which base their religious beliefs on some form of sacred scriptures and human faith. With scientific advancements, however, there has been a rise of secularism. Secularists base their trust on observable, measurable evidence in repeatable scientific experiments. With these two different [approaches] – science based on empirical proof and religion based on faith – it seems that religious beliefs and scientific knowledge can never [be] reconcile[d] due to their differences. However, I am of the stand that these very differences are vital in their reconciliation as they are complementary and fill in the gaps that they each [possess]. Hence, religious beliefs and scientific knowledge can be reconciled to a large extent.

Introduction sets up the premise and context by providing sound definitions of religion and scientific reasoning, which brings the conflict between the two disciplines into focus

Thesis statement and scope of the argument are clear

Some may argue that religious beliefs and scientific knowledge cannot be reconciled due to the differing explanations they provide for certain phenomena. In the ancient world, diseases were seen as the result of the deities' punishment on the individual. The remedy would, therefore, be to repent and offer sacrifices to appease the gods. In today's modern world, science has provided valuable insights that diseases do have a natural cause, like viruses. We can now treat our maladies with different medicine prescribed to us by pharmacists or doctors. Given the more superstitious nature of religion, it seems religious beliefs and objective scientific knowledge are at odds with each other.

Topic sentence could be clearer to highlight what the intention of the paragraph is. Illustration is clear, although more explanation on the notion of rationality could have been developed

However, proponents of the above argument fail to consider that it is [man] himself who misinterprets the happenings of the world around him in relation to religion. Religious beliefs themselves do not contradict scientific knowledge on further scrutiny of the core religious doctrines of the faiths. For example, the Catholic Church used to support the geocentric model of the solar system. Although Pope Urban VIII encouraged Galileo to publish the heliocentric theory, the Pope and the [C]hurch were painted in a negative light in his publication. He was subsequently put under house arrest. It was only years after that the Catholic Church accepted the heliocentric model and reached the conclusion that biblical texts cannot be taken literally all the time. This shows that [man]'s failure to interpret their religious text is the result of [the afore]mentioned clashes between religious beliefs and scientific knowledge. Another instance of misinterpretation of religious texts could be that of extremists interpreting the Qu'ran from fundamentalist principles, leading to [the uprising] of extremist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al Qaeda, where Islamic authorities have declared that these views are not in line with Islam[ic] teaching. Therefore, religious beliefs are not to blame for contradicting scientific knowledge as men are the ones who interpret religious beliefs for their own will and purposes. Therefore, with careful

Example is clear and analyses the motives and intentions that sculpt the conflict between religion and scientific thought

<p>dissection and the study of religious beliefs, these myths can be debunked and seen in harmony with scientific knowledge.</p>	
<p>Religious critics and some scientists regard religious beliefs as a hindrance to scientific development and religious beliefs and scientific knowledge seem to have no hope of reconciliation. In the research and development of science, scientists develop and invent new theories, equations and technology for the progress of humanity. However, religious beliefs seem to disrupt this very noble course of action due to the objections of religious parties. A case in point would be the Catholic Church's stance against stem cell research as it involves the disposal of embryos. Advocating for the sanctity of life, the Catholic Church's vehement disapproval and slippery slope argument that this could lead to designer babies and cloning has slowed the development of scientific research in these areas. Hence, critics are critical of religious beliefs as they are a roadblock to the acquisition of scientific knowledge. It thus seems as if both run head-long [into each other] and are unable to reconcile.</p>	<p>Another opposing argument is offered to show how religion and science may get in each other's way</p> <p>Explanation of topic sentence is clear and precise</p>
<p>On the contrary, I contend that religious beliefs complement scientific knowledge by providing it with a moral compass and a set of morals and ethics when developing new technology, rather than oppose and disrupt scientific knowledge. Given that science is amoral, religious beliefs serve to provoke deep reflection of the ethics of science. This need for religious beliefs as a moral compass is evident in Einstein's equation of <math>E = mc^2</math> which explains that the energy of atomic bombs can be derived from the mass and speed of sound squares. Weapons of mass destruction have been produced with this equation. However, Einstein would never have foreseen the mass destruction capability in the formulation of <math>E = mc^2</math>. Hence, given that scientists pursue scientific knowledge without the ethical consequences, religious beliefs are essential in ensuring ethical regulations are put in place. Therefore, I surmise that religious beliefs fill in the gaps of scientific knowledge and [the two are] able to exist harmoniously together.</p>	<p>Example is retrospective in nature, and ethics is considered after scientific development has been made. Could have chosen a better example that more clearly reflects how ethics stemming from religion is changing the way we consider scientific development now</p>
<p>Lastly, religious beliefs provide deeper meaning of life while scientific knowledge seeks to demonstrate the physical realities. The highest human need of the hierarchy is that of self-actualization, where there's a desire to be the best of one's self. Buddhism and Hinduism seek[] to provide that deeper meaning with [their] Eightfold Path and the goal of Nirvana to escape the cycle of reincarnation. Religious beliefs fulfil spiritual and psychological needs that scientific knowledge can never seek to explain or reach a conclusive argument about. Moreover, recent forays into space show that the universe seems to be coming to an end. This could lead to some people believing that life is meaningless. Religious beliefs thus play the supporting role of giving purpose to people's lives.</p>	<p>Interesting topic sentence showing complementary traits</p> <p>Complementary nature of science and religion could be further expanded</p>
<p>In conclusion, religious beliefs and scientific knowledge are not irreconcilable as their differences only serve to complement each other and provide a fuller and more complete understanding of human existence. Religious beliefs feature prominently in the private lives of people and have historical roots in ancient civilisations. Scientific knowledge has been the pride of the modern era, seeking to explain the various phenomenon and providing solutions to many problems. Both have their limitations and failures. Nevertheless, these limitations should not be the reason for devaluing either. In modern secular societies, scientific knowledge should continue to be acquired under the watchful supervision of religious beliefs on ethics.</p> <p><i>(Oh Anna, 18-15)</i></p>	<p>Good link back to thesis statement</p>

## 2 How far can religious beliefs and scientific knowledge be reconciled?

*By actively comparing the fields of religion and science, the essay manages to generate concise statements about their nature and how they are related. The writer's knowledge about instances of conflict and resolution of differences is clearly seen in the examples employed, and the arguments become clearer as a result. However, the examples can be further elaborated upon to better support the otherwise legitimate argument.*

Religious belief has long been a prominent factor in many people's [lives], and has [thus] survived the test of time. The belief in God – or a higher power – symbolises the faith one has, and the unwavering belief no matter the evidence. More recently, scientific research leading up to scientific knowledge has resulted in many facts and proofs of 'phenomena'. Seemingly, religious belief and scientific knowledge are a dichotomy that has brought about conflict, causing many to believe that due to the very nature of religious beliefs and scientific knowledge, they cannot be reconciled. However, I believe that there has already been a reconciliation between the two, and it is myopic to assume that the human experience has to sacrifice one for the other.

Main point of contention is acknowledged, though how exactly they are in conflict can be emphasised

Clear topic sentence and thesis statement

Proponents [of] the view that religious belief and scientific knowledge cannot be reconciled argue extensively to the divergent nature of the two. Understandably, the belief in God is spiritual and intangible, meanwhile scientific knowledge is tangible and factual. How can the two ever meet? Scientific knowledge seems to build itself on the foundation that is ever-changing. As scientific research progresses, scientific knowledge changes with time. Contrastingly, religious belief does not seem to change with time and the belief of a power higher than [man] and views regarding the way of life [are] largely unchanged today. Therefore, the divergence [on] the basis of religious belief and scientific knowledge has led many to believe that they cannot be reconciled.

Good point made by clearly identifying the key tenets of science and religion

Besides, the conflict between religious belief and scientific knowledge [has] seemed to underscore the inability of reconciliation. Building on their divergent nature, this has caused different theories between the two regarding the laws of nature. [Heliocentrism] brought about by empiricism is contrasted with [geocentrism] as backed by the Bible, and Darwin's Theory of Evolution versus Creationism exemplifies the different beliefs. This has resulted in people who are [advocates] of religious beliefs to accuse scientific researchers of trying to 'play God' and [render] the long standing claims of The Book obsolete. Thus, it is observable that religious beliefs and scientific knowledge propagates conflict between the two, and may hence be [irreconcilable].

The aspect of power can be explored - certain stakeholders may not even want these two domains to be reconciled

However, I would like to assert that [it] is incredibly myopic to view scientific knowledge and religious beliefs under the assumption that both are not reconciled. In fact, those who had religious beliefs have since become more liberal and accepting. For example, Liberal Catholics have found ways to reconcile the Scripture with Darwin's Theory. Furthermore, religious beliefs [have] evolved and some of the present faith [] harps on the complementary nature of the two. Baha'i Faith perpetuates the idea that religious belief and scientific knowledge come hand in hand. This [notion] is supported by one of the greatest scientists of all time, Albert Einstein, who once said, "religion without science is lame, science without religion is blind." Evidently, religious beliefs have reconciled with scientific knowledge in the [sense] that they are able to level out with each other and back each other up, and that some religious beliefs

Could have explained this further to substantiate the claim

<p>even [emphasise] the idea of intertwining the two. Hence, religious beliefs and scientific knowledge [are] already [] in the stage of reconciliation.</p>	
<p>Furthermore, scientific knowledge and religious belief can be reconciled to a large extent as they both serve different parts of the human experience. Scientific knowledge allows for people to understand the laws of nature, while religious belief serves to provide ‘explanations’ for, ironically, unexplainable conundrums in the human world. As humans develop an increasing thirst for knowledge, religious belief is no doubt the panacea for the unexplainable, allowing us to feel contented and satisfied with what we know or do not know, for [that] matter. Additionally, religious belief acts as a moral compass, while scientific knowledge propels action. The belief of ‘karma’ in the Buddhist faith has led to many seeking scientific knowledge to do so in an ethical and moral way, as they believe that good things we do will eventually come back to us. In fact, [the] 1996 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Richard Smalley is one of the many who advocate for considerations of religious belief while developing scientific knowledge in research. This shows how religious belief works the heart, while scientific knowledge works the brain, and both have the potential to come together to look at and develop scientific knowledge while upholding high moral[s] and values in the process. Thus, religious beliefs and scientific knowledge can be largely reconciled.</p>	<p>Clear and valid argument</p>
<p>All in all, there is no doubt that religious beliefs and scientific knowledge are divergent in nature. Despite this, we should (and must) not assume that they are by any means antithetical, and hence not reconcilable. In fact, religious belief and scientific knowledge [have] and will continue to complement each other and provide different parts of the human experience, offering a symbiotic relationship. Nevertheless, it is important to note that while it is laudable that steps have been taken to reconcile the two major components [of] human life, we cannot allow one to assert its dominance over the other, as power dynamics will lead to an ultimately [irreconcilable] relationship.</p> <p><i>(Alvina Lo, 18-U5)</i></p>	<p>A concise conclusion that answers the question clearly, while still providing a balanced perspective</p>

### 3 Does truth still matter in today's world?

*This essay pulls together several threads of understanding about truth. This is a strength in that multiple meanings of 'truth' are considered, but it also surfaces a weakness in the ability to connect these disparate senses of truth. While there is a consistent thesis, more can be done to link the different types of truth together such that the essay forms a coherent and insightful whole, rather than skipping from idea to idea between paragraphs, which can give the impression of disorganisation.*

George Orwell once said, "The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it." These words, while displaying an inadvertently negative and pessimistic view of our societies today, are indeed a painful truth. Truth, being a recount of events either backed with facts and figures, or holding some value to the individual speaking it, does not matter today, as much as it used to and should matter.

The concept of "truth" here may be too broad to be useful in a short essay; it can be defined more neatly

Of course, it must be acknowledged that the role truth plays in inspiring necessary change is integral, especially in today's world, when we are surrounded by factually inaccurate recounts of worldly events. A prime example would be Martin Luther King, who [led] the Civil Rights Movement in 1960s America, motivated by his truths, his beliefs, that all deserved equal rights. His movement inspired others, and [led] to change in society. The truth has the power to introduce new perspectives to open society's eyes to horrors they had been blind to or ignorant of before. Truth inspires change, and it thus matters what kind of truth is present in society; the truth told today shapes our tomorrow. Thus, truth does matter today, as it has the ability to inspire necessary change in our society.

Does not relate to the rest of the paragraph, but bears further investigation

The nature of truth in this instance needs to be explained more clearly

In today's world, when we are faced with increasingly cruel realities and it becomes easier to simply "go with the flow", one's truth plays a big part in shaping our individual identities, our own personal beliefs. Our individual truths will always matter, because it will shape the kind of people we become, and therefore shape our societies of tomorrow. Parents instill values of patience, and kindness, and others, into their child from young, in the hopes that their children will grow up to embody these values. Today, we are faced with events like school shootings in America, terrorist attacks and threats globally, and it becomes increasingly important what we teach the next generation because the truth we teach them today will shape our identities of tomorrow. Therefore, because we deserve a better tomorrow, because truths shape our individual characters, truth matters today.

Subjective truth is an interesting concept to bring in, though its connection with the other meanings of truth are tenuous, resulting in a less focused essay

However, it can be said that only the politician's truth matters. Our politicians are our nation's representatives. They, supposedly, embody impartiality and have the best intentions for the nations they represent. This notion, while seemingly perfect, brings forward the implication that [since] our politicians speak the truth, any opposing arguments from the people themselves are taken as false and invalid. In light of a Dr Christine Ford coming forward to accuse Brett Kavanaugh, an American politician, of attempted rape, and the resultant defence of Kavanaugh by President Trump and members of the public, this notion is especially truthful. The truth does not matter today unless it comes from the mouth of a politician, so many years have been spent creating the image of a politician to be truthful and impartial, invalidating the general people's truths at the same time, as present in the case of Dr Christine Ford, who has had to hire private security for protection from those who support Brett Kavanaugh. Therefore, the truth does not matter in today's world.

This argument can be developed further with another perspective to demonstrate a more complex understanding of 'truth'

<p>The truth does not matter today, because just like in the past, society believes what they want to believe. As Francois Voltaire once said, “Those who can make you believe assumptions, can make you commit atrocities.” While this line immediately brings to mind the Holocaust, [it] also raises examples from today, as in the Trump administration. President Trump’s bombastic and unrealistic claims from his campaign speeches and campaign tweets, and his resultant election to office despite the falsities he so proudly proclaimed, is proof of this. His political move to garner the support of the Southern states, demonising the Africa-Americans and other peoples of colour, promoting a white America, spewing “facts”, gave many people the belief that they had a right to proclaim their racism, as shown in multiple videos of people of colour [and] members of the LGBT community being harassed by whites. Despite nearly all of Donald Trump’s claims being absent of scientific backing or facts and figures, in other words, despite being absent of truth, many decided to vote for him in order to vote for a “white” America, simply because it was something they wanted to hear. Truth, therefore, does not matter today because, as always, people believe what they want to believe.</p>	
<p>All in all, despite the necessity of truths to today’s society, despite our worlds’ need for a wake-up call, despite how much truth should matter today, [there is] the harsh reality that no truth matters, unless it comes from the mouth of a politician. As stated before, truth has the power to inspire change. Truth is something we desperately need today.</p> <p><i>(Caitlin Chong, 18-O2)</i></p>	

### 3 Does truth still matter in today's world?

*This introduction and first body paragraph demonstrate a ambitious attempt with interesting and relevant ideas. While the introduction promises a strong and thoughtful argument that takes into account the notion of 'today's world' and how that affects truth, the rest of the essay needed to more consistently make connections to the key concerns of the question in order to fulfil its potential. More attention could also be paid to establishing the veracity of the keyword 'still' in relation to truth.*

The concept of truth is one that has perplexed the human race since the very beginning of mankind. Truth is defined as the dissemination of accurate and complete information, yet many postulate that there is a much deeper meaning to the term. Truth can rally masses together, or can reap chaos and belligerence between parties. It can garner confidence and trust, or hate and despair. It can even build great nations, or tear great nations apart. The seemingly behemoth power of truth intimidates and shudders the human moral compass, yet it is a value literally worshipped among those who work for the betterment of mankind, for example, political leaders. In the competitive, globalised and ever-changing twenty-first century, truth is **now needed more than ever before** as information and data dissemination have gone beyond the control of any human or country. The volatility of the knowledge-based society today demands for truth to be a regulating factor in today's world in order for mankind to progress even further. Thus, truth certainly matters in today's world, more than ever before.

Thesis statement takes a clear stance on the question, and provides hints of the justification that should follow in the essay

In the fast-paced and sophisticated world that we reside in the diffusion of accurate information on various platforms has been deemed by society as imperative. Avenues such as newspapers, television, and social media are utilised by mass media companies to disseminate information and news on real-world incidents. The pertinence of truth in news is rightfully emphasised, as accurate information is essential for mankind to progress. Fake or inaccurate news and information could be detrimental to societal growth. Looking through the lens of an economist who frequently invests in stocks, inaccurate or false information on the stock market could lead to serious repercussions on his economic well-being, as well as his social or family ties. Should such cases occur on a large scale, it could very well signal the eradication of a stable economy and an outbreak of an economic crisis such as a recession. Unfortunately, the rise of the mass media has certainly allowed various groups and websites to unlawfully exploit the different platforms on the media to spread false news and create unnecessary outcry. A good case in hand would be the American tabloid Celebtricity, which reported that former [US] President Barack Obama had declared a state of emergency after more than three hundred people were shot in Chicago, sparking panic [across] various states in America. However, there was never a declaration of the so-called 'state of emergency'. Another fine example would be the fake news reported by Tokyo Electric Power Holdings after the Fukushima Disaster in Japan seven years ago. The company claimed that radioactivi[ty] levels in Fukushima were 'unimaginable' and that the radiation had spread across the entire Pacific Ocean, threatening even the waters of America. However, scientists and researchers concluded that none of these were indeed true. By then, the damage was done, and the citizens of Japan were already in a state of shock as they deemed the danger levels of the disaster to be much higher than the actual situation, once again causing completely unnecessary paranoia among the masses. As represented by the two case studies, it is with great conviction that I believe truth matters in today's world. Had accurate information been disseminated under such circumstances, the general population would

The example's significance can be made clearer – the importance of truth is because it serves a purpose, particularly in today's world where news spreads easily



arguably have reacted in a more disciplined and civilised manner, simultaneously making it simpler for the government to carry out restoration policies. However, the spread of fake news clearly derailed this and instead created a mountain out of a molehill. Hence, I believe that truth is of paramount importance in today's world.

*(Tang Shih Ern, 18-A4)*

### 3 Does truth still matter in today's world?

*This essay demonstrates a proficiency in foregrounding salient issues, evaluating them, and applying the derived implications towards a cogent argument. However, minor enhancements can be made to improve cogency. As with the earlier responses to this question, a more sustained effort to juxtapose the value of truth in today's world with its value in the past – the phrasing of the question, that it 'still matters', implies that it mattered in the past, and this assumption needs to be consistently addressed – would have made it an even better response.*

The truth has been an age-old virtue that was heavily prized for its persevering value in allowing people to know the accurate outlook of the situations they face, and thus having the ability to make the right choices to solve their problems. However, in today's increasingly interconnected world where information is easily made up, where problems exist not as separate entities but rather much like an entangled ball of numerous threads, waiting to be unravelled gracefully, the significance of truth is questioned as our fast-paced lives require us to solve our problems in the fastest way possible, and very often, telling the truth is troublesome. However, the reality is that it is precisely because of this outlook of today's world that the relevance of the truth should be augmented. Granted, the cost of maintaining the truth is expensive, and may even compromise our ability to tackle issues at lightning speed, but the truth – pun intended – is that telling the truth could sometimes give us a clearer outlook at how to solve today's problems.

Detractors of the statement that the truth still matters in today's would purport that the truth is unnecessary when lies are able to bring about more desirable outcomes to solve a problem. They happen to value the effectiveness of solving the world's problems with fast and attractive solutions, taking the opinion that if people have to be lied to for issues to be resolved, then the truth in this case would not matter. A case in point would be the fake Singaporean blogshop Ivory Lane, which claims to sell jewelry made out of the ivory [from] elephant tusks ([when] the sale of ivory is prohibited in Singapore), [causing] anguished animal lovers to cry out in protest of this blogshop's business, and at the same time attracting other Singaporeans' [attention] to the issue of animal cruelty. It was revealed later on that Ivory Lane was a ploy by the World Wildlife Fund of Singapore (WWF) to cast the issue of animal cruelty into the spotlight. While this was a success in achieving the WWF's aim, raising awareness for a good and noble cause, it is my opinion that **ethics should not be valued over convenience and a yearning for fast response to problems.** As a non-governmental organisation, it is the WWF's responsibility to lead in the preservation of the truth and not delve into deceiving the masses to achieve their aims, albeit noble ones. Thus, as it is ethical to tell the truth, which is what today's world needs a reminder to maintain amidst the complexities of solving problems at a fast pace, the truth still matters in the present day and age.

There is an assumption here about truthfulness being ethical - why such a stunt should be considered unethical if its intentions were good and the truth was meant to be revealed should be justified

Capitalising on the view that telling the truth is the ethical and morally right thing to do, the truth still matters in today's world because holding strong to our morals allows us to weave through the volatile and uncertain climate where information is easily fabricated, allowing us to gain a tight grip on clarity to solve the world's problems with a fresh and uncluttered mind. Especially in the digital age, where the advent of technology has created platforms for people to increase their productivity in work and augment our quality of life, we must bear in mind not to get so caught up in pursuing these goals that we forget about the importance of the truth as a virtue, resulting in careless and misleading outcomes as a result of wanting to

<p>reach the end-points of our tasks as quickly as possible. The maelstrom of faceless identities present on the internet, namely on social media as a result of the digital age, has contributed to a climate of confusion and uncertainty as it is getting increasingly difficult to tell fact from fiction. Fake news is a salient case in point, one example of it being the erroneous accusation of American comedian Sam Hyde by online trolls as the culprit of the June 2016 attacks in London, misleading the masses to throw unnecessary and undeserved suspicion and accusation upon him, and deceiving American police to waste time and resources into interrogating and investigating him, only to find that they were tricked by social media users. Hence, this reflects the propensity of modern media to be used as a tool to deceive the masses, where truth is compromised for amusement and entertainment, as compared to when only the traditional media was present in the past, and truth was highly prized as seen from the numerous rounds of fact-checking that experts and newspaper correspondents underwent to report their facts honestly. It must be noted that such publishing companies that display integrity are still present today, but their thoroughness in fact-checking to report the truth may lose out in the high-stakes race to report the news that citizens crave at top speed. This sadly makes the importance of truth seem as though it is diminishing in today's world, as we often hear of fake news reports that make us question if the truth even matters anymore. However, it is precisely because of this that the truth still holds much significance today as the ability to preserve integrity amidst the maelstrom of careless and erroneous information is highly commendable, and allows us to make better sense of the world today and be able to understand current issues more clearly.</p>	
<p>Lastly, the truth still matters today because in the modern world, countr[ies] are getting increasingly interconnected and our problems can no longer be solved separately, thus it is vital that we need the best leadership that holds integrity close to their hearts to guide the world smoothly. Leaders of countries, especially global superpowers like the USA and China, are highly important as they are the ones that stand behind every decision of magnitude and significance that determine the direction [] which the world takes. There is increasing interdependence amongst countries today due to the need to share information and collaborate to progress, as seen in the formation of international organisations like the United Nations. This is the reason why world leaders need to work together to solve the world's problems like poverty and pollution and to solve them effectively, we need leaders who are truthful to ensure that they do not hide the necessary facts or plausible solutions needed to be considered in tackling global issues. Such leaders, like Xi Jinping and Lee Hsien Loong, are thankfully present as two of the world's most reliable and uncorrupted leaders, but there are also leaders that sadly compromise the value of truth. Hillary Clinton, for instance, has swayed public opinion and steered political process untruthfully during the Democrat elections in the 2016 US Presidential Elections in which Time Warner Cable, the 7th largest operating company and one of Clinton's largest campaign funders, had prematurely and untruthfully reported that Clinton was to be the Democrat presidential candidate over Bernie Sanders when there was evidence to show that Sanders was actually the winner of the poll. This caused many voters to not turn up for voting in California, believing that the decision had already been made. The untruthfulness of Clinton and Time Warner Cable in reporting such inaccurate and false information emphasises the prevailing importance of truth in today's world leaders – if they cannot be truthful to us, how would they be truthful in solving the world's problems? The corrupted government of Haiti that selfishly pocket[ed] 80% of the foreign aid directed to help its people after the 2010 earthquake also highlights that the truth still matters, for if the untruthful leaders are the ones causing trouble in the</p>	<p>These leaders are of countries with relatively high media censorship rankings. What impact might this have on their apparent reliability?</p> <p>This example might perhaps be more suited to the previous paragraph of why truth matters in an era where journalistic integrity competes with the need to release news quickly</p> <p>The links between truthfulness, solving problems and interconnectivity should be clarified</p>

### Navigate Issue #3

<p>world, it is difficult to tackle global issues since they do not cooperate. The potential of the concerted efforts of the world to resolve interconnected issues depends on the integrity of world leaders – by hiding the truth from the masses, they in fact are contributing to a global problem of corruption. Thus, with the widespread prevalence of corruption in the world today, despite noting the fact that corruption may be an age-old problem, the fact is that the truth still matters in today’s world.</p>	<p>The point of why truth still matters should be emphasised, but it is somewhat lost in the convoluted ideas present here</p>
<p>The world today, with countries that are getting increasingly intertwined, are in desperate need of the preservation of the truth in solving global issues like poverty effectively. It is undeniable that the truth is like the knitting needle that has the potential to unravel the entangled ball of intertwined world issues, providing clarity and vision to the globe. It is thus my opinion that the truth still matters in today’s world given this ability of it.</p> <p><i>(Leanne Foo, 18-E2)</i></p>	<p>Returning to the image in the introduction helps to close up the argument neatly</p>

#### 4 'Social media have given people the voice they need.' Do you agree?

*This essay presents a number of pertinent points relevant to the voice that people need which are supported with relevant examples, though the choice of these could be more consistently apt. It achieves a balanced discussion of the central issues, and its structure and organisation are sound, but a greater focus on the keyword 'need' would have strengthened the essay.*

Looking back, it is undeniable that social media [have] drastically changed the way we communicate, the lifestyles that we lead, and even [] the landscape of our society. To the people living in the twentieth century, social media was something unheard of, but in our current times, almost everyone owns a social media account. With the advent of globalisation and improvements in communication technology, social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and Twitter have seemingly become an integral part of our lives. People are free to express their thoughts by posting a comment online, which will then be read by hundreds of millions of others. People have come to realise the might of social media platforms, and have also [sought] to harness the power of social media as a representation of the people's voice. Some have even question[ed] the effectiveness and legitimacy of social media sites [as] a true representation of the voice people need. Nevertheless, I would agree that social media have given people the voice they need, to voice out against oppressive regimes they might be living in or to act as a platform to rally the masses together for a greater cause.

Should have clarified 'the voice they need' more thoroughly – why such a voice is necessary and why the assumption that they did not previously have a voice exists should be considered

Oftentimes, the legitimacy of social media as an effective and legitimate platform for people to voice out their pressing concerns is put into question, as one may [fathom] whether social media can be an impartial platform for people in society to express their views. In many countries, the rise of social media sites is a relatively new trend, especially the developing world where people are still grappling with this new technology. Few measures have been put into place to ensure proper conduct on social media sites, and oftentimes radical or extremist ideology from the few can take on the facade of 'people's voice' and lead to detrimental effects. This can be observed in the use of social media by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to recruit netizens online to become terrorists by indoctrinating them with radical ideologies. Social media has provided a platform for such people to express their ideology, but certainly this is not an ideology that needs to be embraced and should be condemned. As people explore and slowly get used to social media sites, they have also learned to abuse it and [turn] social media into a destructive tool, and not a tool for people to voice out their needs. In Myanmar, many people have access to Facebook and use it as a platform for social networking. However, many news reports have shown that the Myanmar people have used Facebook to incite hateful sentiments against the Rohingya people. The ethnic Burmese people claim that these Rohingya people 'are a threat to their native country' and use Facebook to voice their hatred against the Rohingya people. Indeed, although social media has many merits which allow even the layman to express his or her own views, we ought to recognise the detrimental impacts that the freedom to openly express one's view on social media can have far-reaching consequences.

Good insight about how radical views can be disguised as mainstream

The notion of 'need' should be foregrounded here

On the other hand, social media have given people the voice they need to voice out against oppressive regimes where their individual liberties have been largely restricted. As a result, many people [take] to social media sites to condemn their governments for imposing strict rules on the population to voice out their discontent. Previously, without social media,

<p>domestic events in a country largely remained in the countries, and locals [did] not have a platform to directly challenge the political authorities. The introduction of social media has changed things entirely, as people are now able to express their needs with a single tweet, and with millions of other retweets, a voice of one person can multiple to become the voice of millions of people who express the same discontent towards their government. The 2011 Arab Spring revolution is a prime example which shows how normal citizens of various countries are able to pose a challenge to their governments, which was mostly aided by social media. People living in the Arab world have been living under monarchical rule, where the monarch has the final say and some countries went on further to implement harsh authoritarian measures on its people. It started in Tunisia, where the self-immolation of a person in protest of the government sparked a domestic protest where the people started to post videos of the self-immolation incident which went viral on social media. The people of the Arab world expressed their unhappiness over decades of oppressive and authoritarian rule through Twitter, and ultimately it became a regional revolution which saw some oppressive regimes being overthrown and replaced by democracies. The Arab Spring revolution illustrates the power of social media as social media sites have provided freedom of discourse and allow the ordinary people to express their pressing concerns. The people were fighting for liberty and greater political reform, and social media gave them a platform to mobilise the crowds and effect political changes and was a true representation of the voice people needed.</p>	<p>Good paragraph that is fully relevant to the question and well supported with a detailed example</p>
<p>Social media have also provided a platform for people to mobilise and rally people towards a common cause, especially for the disadvantaged or marginalised communities. In society, people often tend to forget about the minority and marginalised community, either because we are largely ignorant or because there is limited awareness. With the availability of social media, the voice of the minorities can now be heard, as social media has allowed for them to rise up above the crowds and seek support from online netizens. There are many Facebook pages set up by various organisations or even by ordinary citizens, which are catered to serving the needs of the disabled, the elderly, the mentally challenged children and many more. Social media allows for the freedom for almost anyone to set up a Facebook page targeted towards various causes, with the purpose of giving people the chance to voice out their needs and rally the society to help them. The annual YMCA youth-for-causes event employs the use of social media to convey messages and allow youths a chance to collaborate with a beneficiary or organisation in need, allowing those marginalised communities an opportunity to interact with the public, allowing them to voice out their concerns. Many projects aimed at helping a certain community, for example, a project to gather funds for muscular dystrophy research can be found on Instagram. These projects tapped on the social media sites to advance their causes, amplifying the voices of the disadvantaged communities.</p>	<p>A better example to illustrate the marginalisation of voices of the oppressed would be good</p>
<p>Furthermore, as society progresses, many people have started to realise the importance of social media as a platform for ordinary people to voice out their needs. The ease of accessibility and low barriers to entry have allowed people from all walks of life to utilise social media for their own good. As a result, many countries have also start[ed] to recognise the importance and value of social media as an avenue for people to voice out their needs. Governments have seemingly adapted to this new approach of citizen's advocacy and turn[ed] to using social media as a way to engage [their] citizenry. In Singapore, almost all politicians or ministers have a social media account, where they seek to engage Singaporeans</p>	<p>This citizen's advocacy should be foregrounded as the focus of this paragraph, as the citizens are</p>

<p>and also inform the public of various government initiatives. Prime Minister Lee's social media accounts have a huge following, and he constantly uses social media posts, pictures and videos to interact with the masses. This is because governments have recognised the value of social media as a platform where citizens congregate and discuss [] societal issues. People are also free to pose a direct challenge to politicians via Facebook posts, which has happened in Singapore before, especially with the recent debate on repealing 377A of the penal code.</p>	<p>presumably the ones with a need for a voice</p>
<p>The voices of the people are very important and they should never be ignored. Social media have provided immense opportunities for people all across the world to interact, debate and also learn from one another. Because social media is so easy to use and allows for freedom of discourse, anyone has the ability to voice out their individual concerns online. Therefore, I strongly believe that social media have given people the voice they need, to empower normal citizens and improve our society.</p> <p><i>(Dason Yeo, 18-A1)</i></p>	

## 5 Discuss the importance of food in your society.

*This essay argues a number of valid points which are illustrated with examples that demonstrate some knowledge of the local context. However, the argument raised as a balance is not particularly pertinent, and has the effect of derailing the focus of the essay since it follows immediately from the introduction, and so more care should be taken to select opposing perspectives that are wholly relevant to the scope of the question.*

The recent UNESCO (United Nations [Educational, Scientific and] Cultural Organisation) bid by Singapore to value food as an intangible asset of Singapore's heritage and culture, has sparked a wide debate over the importance of food in my society, not just within the economic tangible value of serving as a form of livelihood for many local hawkers, but also the intangible assets of values beliefs and forming the Singaporean identity. While it is true and no secret that the whirlpool of globalisation has led to increasing concerns on food security, food still holds paramount and monumental importance to my society – given how it has made significant contributions to the shaping of the beliefs and values we have today, and its wide-reaching uses even [] within the political arena.

Question can be better contextualised.

Image of globalisation as a whirlpool can be clarified.

Thesis sketches out the argument that is to follow.

There is often a tendency to think that with the growing interdependenc[e] of the world today, and an increasingly profit-driven world, food security is [] a worrisome issue that therefore undermines the importance of food in many societies. Admittedly, within many societies in the world today, driven by the goals of extracting maximum profits for increased productivity, many food producers have attempted to use various technologies that have made food unsafe to eat. For example, China is [renowned] for its 'botox chickens', where many reared chickens have been injected or fed with some form of chemical substances that have been known to increase their growth rates This has led to many cases of food insecurity happening within Singapore, with the more recent ones such as the case of honey melons grown in Australia causing the death of a man, which has raised concerns not just within the population, but also the food safety watchdog AVA, which stopped imports from Australia. However, proponents of this view are merely ignoring the debate over here, which is the importance of food in our society. Given that there has been increasing cases of food insecurity, this does not undermine the value of food within Singapore, which goes beyond whether it is safe to eat or not. Instead, given the rise in globalisation and an increasingly fragmented production chain in the world today, there is instead a[n] increasing importance of food in my society. The fact that many important values, such as filial piety, thrift, have [given] way and yield[ed] to social trends like consumerism as we see today, there is a need for food to reinstate these values and highlight the importance of them. This is especially so within the context of Singapore, with food serving as constant reminders of the values that ought to be extolled in today's society. For example, the annual festivities[,] such as the Chinese New Year for the Chinese Singaporeans [] or the Deepavali celebrated by Indians, are platforms where Singaporeans congregate, eat and catch up with each other's lives. Food as a form of reunion and its ability to bring people together within my society, has made it important in Singapore. Given the watering down of many traditional, yet valuable[,] beliefs and values, there is therefore an increasing need for food to perform its function of bringing these values back to place. Not only is [this] seen within the realms of the family, but it is also being used widely in the realm of religion, where many Singaporeans still use food as part of their offerings to gods and deities they worship, as a way to express their gratitude and [learn] how to be thankful for what has been granted to them. These are values that are of

This is not immediately relevant to the context and the question.

Food security is a highly unlikely argument against the importance of food.

How food does this work of serving as a reminder should be expanded on, since that is the focus of the essay.

Too many different ideas make the argument in this paragraph unfocused.



<p>monumental importance to the stability and cohesion of my society, and it is food that helps to maintain this sense of unity and coherence within my society.</p>	
<p>Secondly, food as a form of identity building in my society reinforces its importance. Singapore is widely known for its cultural diversity and its wide array of races, that have formed the unique identity of Singaporeans. Made up of four races – Chinese, Malay, Indians, and Eurasians – Singapore boasts a host of cultural influence, all of which has been attributed to the ‘Singaporean’ that we define today. And part of this identity building, is the role of food, in joining different cultures together. A prime example of this would be the <i>laksa</i> in Singapore, a widely known delicacy, that has influences from various cultures all around the world, of which comprises all four races that we have in Singapore. For example, the chili and tumeric within <i>laksa</i> is [known] to have Indian influences, while the bean sprouts are [known] to have its influences from the [] Chinese, while the soup base [is known] to have South Asian and Malay influences. Similarly, the curry <i>debal</i>, [] also known as [D]evil Curry, is a mixture of both Eurasian and South Asian influences, which was ‘fused’ in Singapore during the years of [colonisation] by the British, where many Europeans then brought [their] recipes to Singapore. Now, the dish is representative of the Eurasians in Singapore, while the Laksa is representative of the Chinese delicacy culture. Although they seem to entrench ethnic identities rather than national identities, the Singaporean identity is a unique one in which ethnicity and the national identity are inextricably linked, and therefore, promoting one does not compromise on the other. Thus, food[’s] important role in nation-[ and] identity-building, has thus made food an important [] in my society.</p>	<p>Good, detailed examples that illustrate the diversity of influences present in Singapore’s food.</p> <p>Good to acknowledge, though there is space for further development of this idea.</p>
<p>Furthermore, food has also been seen as important in the arena of politics and diplomatic relations in Singapore. Given that Singapore is still a young nation with only 53 years since its independence, it is of incontrovertible truth that Singaporeans do not have a very distinct representation of its culture, and lines between us and that of other countries have been blurred, and therefore there is a lack of defining features of the Singaporean identity, compared to that of other nations, that have a distinctive set of languages, traditions and even religions that seek to separate them from other cultures and nations. However, that is not the case in Singapore. Yet, food is one important component that sets us apart from other cultures, given that ours is a unique amalgamation of different cultures and influences in the world. Therefore, food [is] an important representative of the Singaporean, is thus a widely used tool by the Singaporean government in their diplomatic relations with other nations. For example, during the recent Trump-Kim Summit in Singapore, where leaders from the United States of America and North Korea – Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un – met to discuss [] the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, Singapore acted as a friendly and neutral mediator, and in this case, food has played a pivotal role. An illustration of this would have been the lunch between Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Donald Trump, with an array of local delights being served during the intimate session between the two. An interesting one was the celebration of Donald Trump’s birthday during the lunch, offering him a birthday cake that is made with the flavour of the local dessert <i>chendol</i>, and is therefore representative of the Singaporean spirit and culture. Closer to our region, food has also been used as a conduit to build relationships between governments, especially when we share similar palates and taste buds. For example, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has boasted his ‘Durian-eating session’ with Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, to discuss over issues, such as the High Speed Rail linking Singapore and Malaysia. Therefore, the role of food, to aid in international relations, [has] been recognised in my society, and is</p>	<p>Examples are relevant but quite descriptive. More can be done to draw out the symbolism of food in diplomacy.</p>

<p>therefore of paramount importance. Its charm to be able to [soothe] the nerves [and] lighten the spirit serves as a good [diplomatic tool] between Singapore and the other nations.</p>	
<p>Furthermore, food as representative of Singapore has also helped imbue in Singaporeans a sense of national pride and patriotism[.]. For example, Singapore has recently announced bidding [for] its Hawker culture [to be recognised] as a[] UNESCO intangible and heritage asset, and thus food helps to put Singapore on the global stage and on par with other nations. Given that Singapore is of limited land size, and its widely [known] moniker of the the little, [nondescript] 'red dot' on the world map, we do not have a hinterland of natural resources, and a long history, compared to other nations like China, United Kingdoms, and so on, which have thousands and even millions of years of history. Therefore, these countries can often take pride in [their] tangible assets like the Great Wall of China, or the Big Ben in the United Kingdoms. However, Singapore, that is without these natural landscapes and long history, therefore [has] little place in the global society, and therefore it needs to rely on its unique, intangible, shared value and assets, to differentiate and offer a distinct culture compared to other nations [in] the world. With little economic and political clout, food would therefore be able to replace these gaps and serve as a symbol of Singapore, such as in the case of the Hawker culture. The Hawker culture is one that is unique to many, with many having shared experiences of having to queue for a long period of time, just to satisfy their heart's desires. Therefore, it is this shared experience associated with the foods in Singapore, that imbues in many Singaporeans their national identity, one that is often undermined due to the fact that Singapore is often regarded as miniscule and without large magnificent sceneries.</p>	<p>The development of the paragraph can be more aligned with the topic sentence, to more successfully argue for the patriotism that food affords us.</p>
<p>To conclude on the aforementioned points, food is important in Singapore, given its abilities to retain certain watered-down traditions and values, and even as ways for improving diplomatic relations. Food, given the insecurity, is after all still a means of livelihood and an essential part of our everyday lives.</p> <p><i>(Yeo Shin Loong, 18-A1)</i></p>	<p>Conclusion is brief, and can be written better to drive home the significance of the arguments.</p>

## 5 Discuss the importance of food in your society.

*This piece is notable for the clarity of its ideas, which are conveyed succinctly through a significant mastery of the language. Each argument is faithfully substantiated with well-selected examples, though greater rigour in developing the explanations could lead to gains in the depth of insight.*

Singapore is globally renowned as a foodie paradise, home to a large variety of foods hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds. With all sorts of recommendation websites like Hungrygowhere.com, and a whole section of The Sunday Times dedicated specifically to food reviews, it is clear that food plays a crucial role in my society. This is because it serves as an important cultural symbol and societal glue, that continues to hold fast even while some argue that Western fast food influence is washing it away. As such, food is extremely important in my society as it creates a sense of identity and unity.

Context to the question is provided, leading neatly into the thesis.

Food is crucial to the Singaporean identity, as it serves as a prominent cultural symbol. Though some may argue that many local dishes have their roots in other cultures, Singapore's melting pot of identities allows Singaporeans to shape their own unique food culture without diluting the rich history of each dish. Examples of [these] include Singapore *laksa*, which is a marriage of native Malay spices, immigrant Indian curry and Chinese wok cooking methods to create a dish that speak of its multicultural background and at the same time is distinctly Singaporean. This sentiment is often shared by overseas Singaporeans, where it is notable that that events like SG Day, organised by the Singaporean Embassy in London, heavily feature such dishes to draw crowds and remind Singaporeans of their identity. As such, it is evident that Singaporean cuisine is integral to our societal identity.

Why the fact that many Singaporean foods have roots in other cuisines is important to Singaporeans to the extent that it can be considered a key characteristic of our identity can be developed further.

Our sense of social unity can also be largely credited to food, as it serves as an important social glue. Singaporeans often joke that they 'live to eat' rather than 'eat to live', as food is built into our cultural identity. Therefore, eating food takes up a major part of our lives and the shared dining experiences that come with it create a form of mutual trust and reliance that builds unity. This can be seen in how besides enforcing the racial quota on Housing Board flats in the 1960s, the Singapore government at that time conceptualised hawker centres, where hawkers selling foods from different cultural background[s] were gathered in a single complex to enable mixing of various racial groups. By creating a shared space for Singaporeans of diverse cultural backgrounds to dine together, they effectively used food as a catalyst to grow a sense of interdependenc[e] and unity between Singaporeans, that continues to maintain our social fabric today.

An excellent point that can be illustrated with greater rigour to show how shared spaces for dining serve as a catalyst for social cohesion.

<p>Some may believe that Singaporean food is losing its cultural significance to Singaporeans with the growing proliferation of Western fast food chains in the market. Since today's youth can now grow up on fast food like McDonald's, they argue, they may no longer eat 'traditional' Singaporean cuisine, and therefore no longer see it as part and parcel of their identity. While their concerns are valid, they are unfounded especially in the context of Singapore. Being an immigrant society, Singapore is experienced with assimilating foreign food cultures into its local cuisine, and is capable of melding these new arrivals of fast food into its own food culture. This is observable in the high popularity ratings of McDonald's McSpicy and Nasi Lemak burger, both marriages of local taste and cuisine with Western fast food staples. In fact, one might say that it is specifically because such product offerings are so much more popular than the regular menu items, that it is proven that Singaporean cuisine continues to hold a special place in many Singaporeans' hearts.</p>	
<p>As such, contrary to losing its cultural significance in Singapore, food continues to be a symbol of cultural importance and unity in Singaporean society. <i>Feel free to experience this for yourself at any nearby hawker centre – but go early, because it is sure to be packed.</i></p> <p><i>(Faith Evangeline Seah, 18-E2)</i></p>	<p>The tone of the concluding sentence is informal and inconsistent with the rest of the essay - it can be re-written to be more effective.</p>

## 5 Discuss the importance of food in your society.

*This essay is an excellent discussion of the importance of food in Cambodia, and offers a wonderful glimpse into the society through the lens provided by food. This serves as a great contrast to the ideas surrounding the significance of food in the Singapore context, and brings out differences in the concerns relating to the two. The use of language here is controlled, and the ideas are eloquently and effectively expressed.*

Under the leadership of Democratic Kampuchea, Cambodia aspired to become a self-sustaining agrarian arcadia. Alas, within months under the Khmer Rouge Regime, all aspirations vanished and the country plunged into downright terror: countless people perished either because of a state-initiated purge, rampant diseases, or widespread famine. Back then, none could deny the importance of food to sustain life, or the severity of the lack thereof. However, as the people's living standard climbs and the economy progresses, there is a growing sentiment that there is sufficient food and thus the focus should be placed elsewhere. To this, I beg to differ: food still is of paramount importance to the Cambodian society because it remains inaccessible to many and its integral role in the preservation of our culture cannot be discounted.

Context is immediately presented in the introduction, such that the rest of the essay is set against this backdrop of ideas surrounding food.

First and foremost, there exists a school of thought that argues that since Cambodia is becoming more prosperous, the issue of whether there is enough food to feed the people diminishes in significance. One glance at the city of Sihanoukville with its towering skyscrapers and phantasmagorical resorts [and] anyone would be convinced of the economic progress Cambodia [has] experienced. After all, the city and Cambodia as a whole has gained billions of dollars in the form of foreign direct investment, especially from Chinese investors. As such, household income surely must have skyrocketed and people would be moving away from satisfying the basic needs of acquiring food and [toward] other needs such as entertainment. Consequently, should there be more focus on entertainment rather than on food? Unfortunately, proponents of this view have a superficial understanding of the situation. The big businesses such as hotels and restaurants are owned by the Chinese and the locals work under them for a measly wage. There exists great disparities in wealth, not unlike the tale told by Charles Dickens in his Tale of Two Cities. Still, the poor remain shackled by poverty. As a result, many are not able to afford food, and they remain heavily malnourished. Therefore, the importance of food in Cambodia should not be overlooked.

The practical importance of food is highlighted here.

Secondly, since the consumption of food is a physiological need, coupled with the fact that many cannot have access to it, its importance should be maintained. One reason why there is not sufficient food [is] because of the low local production. This is largely due to the traditional methods of crop cultivation. For instance, cattle are used to plough the land instead of utilising machinery, and there is a lack of a proper irrigation system, meaning that crop yield is heavily dependent on the rain. When there is a long spell of drought, which is increasingly common, food production decreases and crops, such as rice, can [only] be cultivated once a year, compared to up to five or six times a year in neighbouring Thailand. This is especially detrimental to the low-income farmers who cannot afford foreign imports. To aggravate matters, politicians sometimes masquerade as messiahs, and provide food to the low-income group, which comprises a large portion of the country, to garner their support so that they can stay in office. In the 21st century, everyone should be guaranteed that their primary needs such as shelter and food are met, especially when there is [now a] greater focus on human rights. Therefore, time and effort should still be devoted to the

<p>provision of food, whether by the government or non-governmental organisations. Only until everyone is guaranteed that this basic need is met and malnourishment is eradicated should the importance of food dwindle.</p>	
<p>Lastly, food in Cambodia, or more specifically the Khmer culinary cuisine, is an essential part of our culture and it helps preserve said culture, rendering its importance indisputable. Much like language, food is a cultural manifestation of a society. Embedded in [food are] key virtues [] and the posterity can learn more about their culture through food. Again, much like the Khmer language, the Khmer cuisine encapsulates the story of a historical struggle against the forces of French colonialism in the 20th century. This is evident in the evolution of some traditional dishes to include the [baguette] as the main staple instead of rice. Moreover, societal values and norms are woven into our cuisine. For example, when any Khmer indulges in a soup, what comes to their head is the proverb which recites that “while you drink the soup, do not forget the meat”. What this means is that, do not forget the bigger picture and your ultimate goal. This helps shape the psyche of younger Cambodians to always focus on their goals. Thus, food in Cambodia plays an important role in culture and cannot be dismissed.</p>	<p>How this is indicative of struggle rather than learning from another culture should be brought out - development of example should be aligned with the point that is being argued.</p>
<p>All in all, food is of great importance in the Cambodian society because many people still do not have access to sufficient food, and also, it is a crucial aspect of our culture and helps shape the Cambodian identity. Nonetheless, with regards to the lack of food, I hope that within the very near future, it becomes a concern of the past and all Cambodian children can go to bed with a fully belly, and the Khmer Rouge becomes nothing more than a bad memory from a distant past. However, I am certain food would continue to be an important part of our culture.</p> <p><i>(Ponhvoan Srey, 18-U5)</i></p>	<p>This certainty can be justified, such as by noting the irreplaceable role that food necessarily has in human survival, to reinforce its significance..</p>

**5 Discuss the importance of food in your society.**

*This clearly written response raises a good range of ideas that are wholly relevant to the focus on the importance of food. The arguments used to support the thesis are often insightful, well developed and intelligently supported, but the balance is relatively underdeveloped in comparison in terms of depth. It can be advantageous to present these valid opposing points with a level of depth that corresponds to one's own arguments, and to provide counter-arguments or rebuttals to them. This has been neglected here to the effect that the opposing points are presented and accepted as fact.*

It is a well known fact that Singaporeans love their food. It has traditionally been an integral part of Singaporean culture and daily life, and has served many purposes over the years. However, with the decline in the willingness of the next generation to take over the Singaporean hawker business, as well as the increasingly busy lives that Singaporeans lead, the question of whether food still remains important to Singaporeans is surfaced, and the importance of its role in Singaporean society is hence questioned. However, the continuing love of food in Singapore is ultimately undeniable, [and] while critics might be skeptical about its importance, food continues to be an integral part of our social lives, culture, and national identity and pride.

How increasingly busy lives might be linked to a lessening importance of food could be explained.

The reasons that result in this stand could be furnished, so the logic is evident.

In changing times, some are skeptical [about] the importance of food in Singaporeans' lives. In view of the youths' and young adults' disinterest in picking up the hawker trade, the government's continuing efforts to revitalise the hawker scene seem futile. While it might have been a feasible job with a respectable income in the past, today's youth are less drawn towards such a trade. This would perhaps be due to the increasing cost of living in Singapore, where newlyweds would save up for years to purchase a BTO, or built-to-order, government apartment. Utilities and basic necessities have also become more expensive, with water prices rising rapidly over the past few years. The lifestyle of modern Singapore, and the economic ideals of the youth are seen to be incongruous with the lifestyle of a food seller in a hawker center. While some might aspire to pursue such a profession, it is simply not feasible. Hence, looking at the new generation's willingness to take over the hawker scene, the importance of food as a profession seems to have diminished.

This point could be developed in more depth with the consideration of the contextual factors such as the beliefs of Singaporeans that prevent these jobs from being respectable and remunerated accordingly.

In addition, Singaporeans do lead increasingly busy lives. Many even find themselves unable to enjoy a full meal, or spend as much time [having] it as before, a [situation] that is common in many developed countries. Some choose to skip meals, or [stuff] them down, before returning to their busy lives. [Working] women, too, find themselves unable to cope with the demands of work and domestic life, many choosing to sacrifice the time spent cooking for the family for work, or other chores instead. With the working population finding themselves more pressed for time, it is no wonder that they spend less time on their meals, and on food in general, bringing to mind the question of how important these meals are to them.

<p>However, these do not define the rest of Singapore, and do not definitively devalue food in our society. While the citizens of present day Singapore may seem to prioritise food less, in viewing it as a viable career option, or spending less time and effort on meals, this does not mean that food has lost all its importance in Singapore. The continuing role of food in social events, and in bringing a community together is still constant. It is undeniable that Singaporeans of all ages still gather from time to time over a meal. It is in fact these meals that bring people together, be it wedding dinners or baby showers, celebratory events [which] all include food as their highlight. Extra effort is often put into deciding the menu for such gatherings, knowing that guests and invitees would be talking and bonding over it. Even in meals that are less formal, a largely communal aspect [is still retained]. Tables in a coffee shop are also reflective of this – many places have large tables that could fit up to [ten] people, for the purpose of allowing groups of people – families, colleagues, friends – [to] interact over a meal. Even when one eats alone, it is commonplace for one to ask to share a table with even strangers, and hence, food can bring people together in such a way. Even in the political aspect, food serves as a way for our country’s leaders to create friendly, diplomatic ties with leaders of other countries. In the recent Trump-Kim summit, Prime Minister Lee hosted these two visitors for a meal, <b>photos of which circulated online</b>. Hence, it is undeniable that food serves a social role in Singapore, serving to bring all sorts of people together, be it in a celebratory, public, or political setting.</p>	<p>The paragraph is well developed, with care taken to justify the argument with multiple perceptive illustrations, each of which add a dimension to the argument.</p> <p>More can be said about the impact such a use of food can have - what does being pictured enjoying a meal together convey to global audiences?</p>
<p>We also observe how food has become a medium for sharing and preserving culture and heritage in Singapore. Singapore is and has been a large melting pot of different ethnicities and races. These groups of people bring their culture and heritage to Singapore, and share and preserve their experiences through their foods. In hawker centers, it is easily observed that stores specializing in different cuisines are all jumbled together, reflective of our mix of different races [in] Singapore. The creation of these stores also serves as mediums for their heritage to be preserved, not only in the craft of the hawkers, but also in the minds and bellies of their customers. These stores serve to thus preserve their culture in a cheap and accessible way, which might otherwise have been lost. They also share their culture with others in this way, as Singaporeans constantly consume food and delicacies from other cultures. A Malay child would be able to tell what a <i>xiao long bao</i> is, while Chinese children could learn to wrap a ketupat. Food does not only serve to preserve and share culture and heritage among different races, but through different generations as well. Children of different races first learn about their culture from the food they eat at home. <b>This is then preserved when elders teach the newer generation how to wrap a dumpling, or make a glutinous rice ball</b>. The presence of food also conversely pervades their heritage, where large parts of many cultures emphasize or include food. The Chinese gather every year for a reunion dinner, which is said to bring prosperity and peace to the family. The muslims also fast yearly during Hari Raya, and break fast together as a family. For them, this is a communal activity and also reinforces their religious beliefs. Hence, we see that food is extremely important in Singapore, in preserving and sharing of one’s culture, which is a big part of Singaporean life, and the cultural identities of an individual.</p>	<p>More than one dimension of sharing of culture and heritage is considered, but there can be a stronger link made between simply the sharing of food and food practices and the work they do of preserving culture.</p>
<p>Food can also create national pride and a sense of national identity. Singaporeans and Malaysians are well known to jokingly compete over who has the best food, with each side strongly defending their own. This not only shows how Singaporeans are proud of the food we have, but also how the cuisine in Singapore becomes definitive of who we are as a country, and [distinguishes] us from others. Singaporeans have [] great pride in their food,</p>	



<p>and hence see it as representative of the country. In bringing foreign friends to Singapore, it is not uncommon to see locals introducing chicken rice, or a local dish <i>laksa</i> to them. This wish for international recognition of our cuisine can also be seen in the overwhelming amount of discussion and debate online [over] a short scene in the recent film <i>Crazy Rich Asians</i>, where its characters had a meal in Newton Food Center. Some argued on whether the satay there was, as the main character claimed, 'best in town', but most felt pride in seeing the local fare represented on an international scale. While food may sound trivial, its role in creating a national identity and national pride cannot be ignored.</p>	
<p>In conclusion, while changing times may have caused citizens to prioritize food less, be it in their time spent eating or in their willingness to pursue it as a profession, it is undeniable that food still has a large role in the social, cultural, and national level. While certain individuals might not seem to see food as an important part of their lives, it still remains important to [my] society as a whole. Furthermore, we cannot define the importance of food in such trivial ways as whether the younger generation is willing to take it on, or whether locals spen[d] enough time eating. Rather, looking at its impact and role in Singaporean society, we can conclude that food is indeed important to Singapore and its peoples throughout time. [It] serves to rally the people, and bind them together, showing that food does indeed play a larger role in Singapore. While the fate of our hawker business remains uncertain, the importance of it does not, and we must understand that the concept of food does serve great importance in Singapore.</p> <p><i>(Lew Kylin, 18-U1)</i></p>	

## 5 Discuss the importance of food in your society.

*This essay, which examines the importance of food in the context of China, provides another interesting point of comparison to the essays written on the Singapore context. The strengths of this essay are a depth of understanding about the roles food plays in the context, and an ability to make links to emphasise the significance of each of the arguments - in other words, there is an awareness of the bigger picture. The essay can however still be strengthened through more balance, which is lacking here.*

“People regard food as top priority”. This ancient Chinese saying vividly shows how much the ancient Chinese valued food. As China has developed through all the setbacks and challenges to reach today’s achievements, the importance of food in Chinese society still holds. Food can be simply regarded as the substance people consume, yet it is critical for Chinese society today. Food is the cornerstone of stability of society, a source of sense of belonging of people, and a representation of Chinese culture.

Short but effectively conveys the message

As a necessity for people’s daily life, food serves as the base of a stable society. The role of food as a cornerstone may only be seen clearly when people lack food. Without food, people may suffer malnutrition or even starv[e]. As lack of food can threaten people’s survival in the worst case, fear of starving can be a source of [instability] and riots in the worst scenario. The sufficient supply of food is crucial for all the countries in the world, especially for China with the world’s largest population. The threat of food deficiency is only more alarming for the population of 1.4 billion in China, there the government is putting in great effort to secure the food supply. For example, the Chinese government has set a “red line” of 1.8 billion [hectares] of farming land. Breaches like illegal construction on farming lands are punished harshly like the punishment of Qin Lin Industry for developing commercial housing on farming land in Shaanxi Province in [the] 2000s. China also imports millions of tonnes of food every year to supply its market. With such efforts, in today’s Chinese society, [the] harsh threat of food deficiency is a rare case. On the cornerstone of sufficient food supply, Chinese society functions and [develops] normally.

Topic sentence succinctly conveys the relationship between our physical need for food and its greater impact on society

Beyond its role as a necessity in daily life, food gives people a psychological connection with their hometown. The taste of [] food [from their hometown] reminds people where they are from and all their memories associated with their home. When people are residing away from their hometown in a different city, different province, or even a different country, the multisensory experience of consumption of hometown food can to some extent address their homesickness. The role of food, in this case, as a connection between people and their home, [is] to unite communities from individual districts of China, and the integral Chinese society as a whole. For instance, because of the huge difference between Shandong cuisine, in Northern China, and Zhejiang cuisine, in Southern China, Zhejiangese in Shandong, students, workers, retirees, often visit Zhejiang restaurants in Shandong, especially Taizhouji, a restaurant chain serving Zhejiang cuisines. Zhejiangese also hold parties in Taizhouji for celebration. This example shows how Chinese people maintain their connection with their hometown through the medium of food, and how people from the same district are united by food. Therefore, in [a] psychological aspect, food serves to maintain the unity and connections of people and their respective communities, which in turn unites the Chinese society as a whole. Thus, food is very important for Chinese society.

Acknowledging the greater significance of this argument for food’s psychological impacts gives further weight to food’s importance

<p>Moreover, in a more general aspect, food is a representation of various Chinese cultures. Different districts of China have developed different cultures from different environments. Thus, food derived from these cultures [carry] the unique aspects and characteristics of the culture. Food, more than just a carrier of cultural elements, serves to add variety and vividity to the culture it belongs to. In Chinese society, food is apparently integrated with the culture behind it, thus food can also contribute to the popularity of the Chinese culture. Hence, food, in Chinese society, carries elements of different Chinese cultures and serves to spread them. To illustrate that, we can examine the case of Sichuan cuisine. Sichuan cuisine is known for its spicy flavour. In recent years, Sichuan cuisine [spread] across China and even to other countries such as Singapore, the [United States] and Russia. Thanks to Sichuan cuisine, more people [got] to know the Sichuan culture behind it better, such as the emphasis on friends and family in Sichuan culture. We can see that in [a] cultural aspect, food is indeed a good medium for various cultures in China to spread [their] culture. As culture is a crucial part of Chinese society, food, in turn, holds significant meaning for the society of China.</p>	<p>To align with the previous paragraphs, this argument could be extended to consider why such a role of food is important to the society - why does China need or want its culture to be appreciated by others?</p>
<p>In conclusion, food is of utmost importance in Chinese society as the role of [a] society stabiliser, source of sense of belonging and medium of Chinese culture. It is now of little wonder why Chinese often value Chinese food so much. Different types of food in China have their unique characteristics, and overall, they represent a crucial and vivid part of Chinese society as a whole. The importance of food in Chinese society continues from the ancient times, to the present, and it will still hold in the future.</p> <p><i>(Ma Guangheng, 18-15)</i></p>	

## 6 'There is no better time than the present to be alive.' Discuss.

*This essay presents a ruminative and nuanced discussion structured around a few conditions for comparison. While it is interesting, there is space for a greater scope and more evident logic in the choice of these particular conditions over others, such that the argument made can be a more comprehensive and coherent assessment of the question.*

There is a saying that our present population [was] born “too early to explore space, too late to observe dinosaurs,” which is an apt description of the issue of whether the present is the best time to be alive. [There are many conditions that people consider when determining whether the ‘best time’ is the past, the present or the future.] These conditions serve as a yardstick for humanity [to] progress and hence an objective measure for whether a certain time period is ‘best’.

A clear thesis statement that sheds light on why these ‘conditions’ are being used as evaluative criteria would help to clarify the argument

The most prominent condition is that of technology. It is the best it has ever been; what was deemed [a] fantasy is now very much a reality. In the past, flying was considered a technological impossibility, but thanks to the efforts of the [W]right brothers, we are now able to travel vast distances to reach places that we never could have in the past. Improvements in technology [have] resulted in higher quality material comfort and hence a higher standard of living. Gone are the days where one has to walk to get to places, live in caves or thatch[ed] huts, or not even have access to toilet paper! The best innovation of all – since fire – is also [present], the internet. With [the] touch of a screen, the world can be your oyster, you can access large swathes of data about current happenings in the world or [even] create a virtual reality to escape into as you will. However, due to the nature of technology, we know that the best has yet to come. Even now, the fringes of technological advancement are still being pushed. Self-driving cars, [artificial] intelligence – the future holds limitless potential, and perhaps one day, colonising more and curing cancer will not be [] pipe dream[s].

Another condition is that of [the] complexity of life. Due to advancements in technology, our lifestyles have changed and become more complex. In the past, we did not know much about the world and hence had [fewer] things to consider, such [as] how [hunter-gatherers] only had to [occupy] themselves with gathering food and raising children as their biological instincts [told] them to. Now, there are more options available to us and hence an increased opportunity cost. “Do I want to be a dentist or a doctor? Do I want McDonald’s or Subway? [Should I] study in school or sleep? [Should I] drink with a plastic straw or save [the] Earth?” There are many more alternatives [available,] and combined with the fast-paced [ever-changing] world, there is [a lot] of stress. For example, Singaporean [youth] already have to worry about what profession they [wish to] have and take steps such as burning the midnight oil to achieve their goals[. The alternative to that] would be losing the rat race and being in a less ‘regarded’, less ‘successful’ profession, which is simply not acceptable [to] them.

Is having more choices really the factor that causes greater stress?

<p>Admittedly, having complexity in our lives is not always a bad thing. For one, a sophisticated life is an entertaining one. There is little mundanity in a disorderly world and it can be exciting to see developments unfold. The [Trump-Kim] Summit is one such example that grabbed the world's attention; there [were] no signs of North Korea seeking a peace agreement and out of the blue, that changed [in an] [instant]. Being forced to adapt and navigate the world's waters can prove to be quite thrilling indeed. Furthermore, from the point of view of [] Maslow's hierarchy of needs, having more complexity does not mean the issues we face are of more pressing need[], rather that the issues faced are [of a] higher order, such [as] the rights of [homosexuals] or [Black people,] instead of simply basic needs like food and shelter[. Thus,] we are simply trying to address issues with the mental, emotional [and] spiritual needs of humans to elevate us to a higher place of enlightenment.</p>	
<p>There is also the biodiversity of the world, <b>which is the best it will ever be[,] but that is uncertain.</b> While new species are being discovered [every day], they already 'exist', just that we [have] not found them [as of yet]. However, with the onset of global warming, [some] species are already facing extinction or are already extinct. We might never be able to see dodo birds or dinosaurs again, and this does show that the biodiversity of the world is getting smaller and will continue to do so. Why then, is the state of biodiversity uncertain? Perhaps in the future, science and technology might advance to the point where we are able to create extinct species from just fragments of their DNA. However, until then, we can only appreciate the biodiversity we currently have or read about the extinct species in [books], which does not confer the same pleasure as watching them in the flesh. Hence, living in the present is the best time to appreciate [the] Earth's biodiversity and we should enjoy [it] while we still can.</p>	<p>It is unclear what this argument about the presence of biodiversity truly has to do with the best time to live. Why this is important as a factor should be explained</p>
<p>In the end, although the question of whether there is no better time than the present to be alive is subjective, I do believe it is the best time. From a philosophical point of view, the past is behind us, the future has not existed; all that matters is that we are alive, we will never be alive again and that is why life is the best it will ever be, been or will be.</p> <p><i>(Benjamin Chia, 18-A4)</i></p>	

**7 ‘Developed countries have the responsibility to accept refugees.’ Do you agree?**

*This essay demonstrates a confident and controlled personal voice. It raises relevant and insightful arguments in an intelligently organised manner with consistent focus on the main contention of the question, but still displays a sense of fluidity that draws the reader in. The balance is dealt with in a very clear manner and illustration is wide-ranging – something necessary when dealing with a question of such scale. In all, the complexities of the issue raised by the question are excellently addressed and presented commendably.*

Angela Merkel’s victory in the recent German elections came as a surprise to many given the rising xenophobic sentiments in the country. There was latent tension due to refugees taking away jobs and weakening the German economy, waiting to turn into an actual conflict. Since the Chancellor’s decision to take in thousands of refugees from Syria, her administration has been criticised for doing so at the expense of her people. This raises the conundrum as to whether economically developed countries like Germany and many other[s] are obligated to accept asylum seekers, given the variation in sizes for developed countries[,] like geographically limited Singapore[,] to acres of land in the United States of America. We have to ruminate on whether this responsibility is present and justified. After all, displaced persons are usually the result of civil strife or racist sentiments from their own countries[,] such as [in] the case of the [Rohingya refugees]. When evaluating a [country’s] responsibility, we have to take into account its sovereignty and by extension[,] whether it affects or compromises its duty to protect itself. Every sovereign country is autonomous and would not be responsible for the citizens of others if its own citizens would be compromised. However, privileged developed countries may owe a moral responsibility on the premise of capacity and from a humanitarian perspective, preservation of life may transcend other rights to make accepting refugees obligatory.

Good point explaining how ‘developed countries’ are not all the same - the introduction shows a clear awareness of the context and key issues surrounding the point of contention

Clear and balanced thesis statement

Some may say that developed countries have no responsibility to accept refugees on the basis of sovereignty[,] where every country is entitled to control its own borders and act in its self-interest with regard to domestic affairs. This means that if the acceptance of refugees could be proven to degrade the quality of life of a [country’s] citizens, it can then reject [doing] so. Evidently, many European countries share this sentiment[,] with countries like Italy vehemently rejecting refugees and channelling them to other countries. Offering asylum definitely leads to a cost on the economy and strain on the existing infrastructure. The perception that refugees would compete against the locals for jobs is also a visceral threat. Given these harms, real or perceived, the government should not have the responsibility to offer asylum. The government of a sovereign country has the people’s interest at heart[,] given [] they were elected by the locals to represent their interests and in fact, by the social contract, they have taken away the rights of citizens via laws and taxation and are thus principally bound to serve its people in this transaction of rights. Thus, the beliefs and values of sovereign societies can very well contradict with the international expectations. It is thus principally unjustified to assume developed countries have a responsibility to comply with [the] international doctrine and accept refugees.

More distancing techniques can be employed to remind the reader that this view is held by others, and is not necessarily championed by the writer

This examination of the role and responsibilities of a government usefully highlights that a government’s top priority should be its own citizens because that is the reason for its existence

However, though this may be true in xenophobic countries, developed countries still have a responsibility to the world at large. In an increasingly globalised world, countries (be it developed or not) are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Hence, the idea of a sovereign state is called into question in status quo. With international alliances and unions like the Association of Southeast Asian [Nations] and the European Union, developed nations

The underlying relationship between nations is used as a reason for nations to look beyond their own interests

This argument

<p>have played a bigger role in the world and [have] duties beyond its own citizens. With the power [asymmetry], developed countries set precedence for other nations to follow and have a shared responsibility to preserve world order. In fact, the alliances imply that economic turmoil in other nations may affect [another nation's] economy or diplomacy at large. This is seen [through] Greece's huge debt [causing] the EU to face an economic downturn. It is thus not necessarily true that a sovereign country only acts to preserve its own citizens and may thus have to comply with international standards for developed countries and offer asylum.</p>	<p>extends the notion of a government's duty beyond the borders of the nation</p>
<p>With duty as the premise to [the] acceptance of refugees, the duty of a developed country to accept refugees may be derived from its capacity to do so. Since it is clear that developed countries have at least some responsibility to accept refugees, the practical justification would further support the thesis. With the lottery of land mass, political leaders and geography, the world that has formed sees countries with [a] large land mass like [the] USA and China emerge[,] as superpowers[,] while African nations remain undeveloped due to historical suppression by colonial masters like the United Kingdom. This mean[s] that developed nations may not have been developed by their own efforts[,] but at the expense of less developed nations – be it through colonisation or waging wars. This shifts the responsibility to developed countries to assist the rest of the world. With progress, developed countries have become have become more economically and socially stable with impeccable [Gross Domestic Products] and little to no civil unrest. They also have existing infrastructure to support its own people and others. Comparatively, [a] less developed [country] may struggle to clear its debt [and] please its citizens while maintaining economic growth. Countries like India and South Africa may struggle to offer basic necessities to its own people[,] having to deal with epidemics or conflicts like the ones over Kashmir for the case of India and Pakistan. Resultantly, developed countries have the capacity and are thus best suited to aid refugees from neighbouring countries. Therefore, by the criteria of capacity, developed nations are the most likely candidate[s] to be invested with the responsibility to accept refugees.</p>	<p>Clearly shows that even though the other side of the argument is recognised, the rest of the essay will be focused on supporting this stand</p> <p>Interesting point</p> <p>A clear and valid argument</p>
<p>Apart from responsibility on the basis of capacity, developed countries may also have a moral duty to accept refugees. From their viewpoint, they have suffered unprecedented persecution and discrimination, having their homes subjected to arson[,] in the case of [the] Rohingyas. Having been rejected by their own countries[,] they enter perilous waters, leaving many dead. This leaves the question on the sanctity of life as to whether the lives of refugees, specifically, are important. It is true that accepting refugees may infringe on [citizens'] quality of life[,] but does it justify refugees dying and having no life to speak of in the first place? It is a belief in most societies that life is the most sanctified right and is an <i>a priori</i> good since it gives access to all other rights. Hence, the protection of a refugee[s] life may thus be more important than giving citizens an ideal life. This narrative places a moral burden on developed countries to assist in accepting refugees whose [lives are] at risk. This concept of the sanctity of life is reciprocated in developed countries with the sensationalist media coverage of Syrian refugees and the image of a dead young Syrian refugee[,] prompting Germany to accept refugees at the start. The value of a life should be presumed and if the only capable countries are developed[,] then the moral obligation is on these countries to carry out the act. Therefore, it can be said from a humanitarian and moral perspective that developed countries have some responsibility to accept refugees for the protection of human life.</p>	<p>Explains why it is important that developed countries fulfil their moral obligation.</p> <p>Highlights that countries should help if they have the capacity, but it so happens that most countries with the capacity are developed ones. Clearly links back to the question</p>

In conclusion, the complex issue of refugees involve[s] the conflict of beliefs and values[,] be it whether sovereignty trumps obligations to the international sphere, or the interest of a [country's] people against the preservation of life. In this interconnected and interdependent world, no man nor country is an island and no country can escape from some responsibility to help others, especially developed nations. Moreover, these nations are in the best position to help refugees and protect the sanctity of life from which all other rights can exist. Though Angela Merkel's victory was surprising to many, it was a victory nonetheless. A victory not just for her[,] but for human rights to show that there is still humanity left in developed nations, that they see their capacity and privilege[,] and most importantly, that they recognise they have a responsibility to something other than themselves.

*(Natthaphong, 18-U4)*

Neatly refers back to the introduction while still addressing the main point of contention in the question



**8 'History is only written by the victors.' How far do you agree with this statement?**

*This response shows a marked proficiency in highlighting and discussing relevant areas of discussion, though there could be even greater nuance in the evaluation of these issues. The illustrations used demonstrate good knowledge in the subject area, and are wholly relevant. Note that while what is presented here is a strong argument, it is also an incomplete one - care should be taken to present an essay that is more complete, keeping in mind the limitations of the examination conditions, or the scope and clarity of the argument may be compromised.*

Hitler had once proudly proclaimed to older generations of detractors of the Nazi regime in Germany, "Who are you to stand in the way of our path to restore pride and honour in our country? You are old. You represent the old order. Your sons and daughters stand in our camp now. When you are gone, they will know nothing but the glory of the German nation and the Nazi regime." His proclamation is one of the many in different forms and different languages, but all point to a central theme: that those who have proven themselves superior or victorious over others will be in the position to shape and change history. While such a theme is recurrent amongst national leaders and statesmen of countries and communities that have long possessed economic and geopolitical superiority over others, there has been an increasing clamour amongst different communities, some even within the same country, for the state to recognise and respect historical narratives that have existed alongside the dominant discourse, but have been sidelined or outright oppressed due to different reasons. Given that the dominant and often oppressive nature of the victorious community often provokes alternate versions of history to surface, coupled with divergence of views on how historical narratives should be constructed even in different factions of the victorious community, I strongly believe that such a view of history being written by the victors is a greatly contestable claim, hence largely disagreeing with it.

To start off, in the immediate and long-term aftermath of a physical victory of one community over another, remnants of the defeated community that band together to resist the dominating and often oppressive policies of the victors tend to publicise and [propagate] alternative forms of the historical narratives as portrayed by the victorious community. Such groups do so, often in the hope of keeping a spirit of independence alive in the defeated populace to galvanise resistance against the victorious nation or community, celebrating these different historical narratives to foster a sense of communal unity amongst the defeated populace and reinforcing their distinct ethnic and cultural identity. In Aceh, at the northern tip of the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, the populace there is bonded closely through practice of a more fundamentalist version of Islam and a distinct Acehnese culture. When the Dutch colonised Indonesia in the 1900s, they were unable to completely subdue the Acehnese through education and economic empowerment even though they physically controlled the province, because popular resistance present in the province was led by Islamic religious leaders who decried Dutch colonialism as degenerate as compared to the affluent and powerful Acehnese Sultanate of the past. Dutch narratives of empowering and enlightening of the Acehnese population gained little headway amongst the local populace due to a persistent showcase and celebration of the Acehnese history by Islamic religious leaders (imams). When the independent Republic of Indonesia tried to assert its authority through economic and social development over Aceh after independence in the 1970s, they too, found it almost impossible despite achieving territorial control due to the imams' strong influence on the populace, who decried the Javanese-dominated Republic as neo-colonists

<p>and published many literary works emphasising on the Acehnese [interpretation] of Indonesian history to counter the influence of the new history syllabus developed in 1985, where history was written exclusively from the Javanese perspective and emphasised heavily on the state's intended historical narrative of Indonesia. Such Acehnese literary works have found widespread popularity amongst the general populace in Aceh and across Indonesia, leading many to question the reliability and utility of the state-sponsored history syllabus in giving a factual account of Indonesian history. This demonstrates how history, far from being written and dominated by the victorious community, can also be written and [propagated] by the communities defeated and marginalised.</p>	<p>Excellent point, but more consideration can be given to whether this is a common occurrence or a rarity</p>
<p>Furthermore, historians and the populace of the victorious state are also divided on how to approach the task of constructing historical narratives, given that international relationships and geopolitical circumstances, as well as domestic issues may lead [] them to construct and believe in historical narratives that, contrary to favouring the interest of their state through justification and glorification of policies and actions, may in fact swing in favour of the communities oppressed, defeated and marginalised. There are many historians that believed in constructing historical narratives based on facts and factual accounts alone, such as famous Prussian historian [Leopold] von Ranke, who championed a historical narrative that "resolves to only [stick] to the facts and will not feature personal opinion nor bias in the midst of construction", while other historians, believing that a small amount of literary and personal flair was needed to weave a historical narrative, were influenced heavily by the geopolitical situations and international relations at that time, culminating in different interpretations of the same historical event originally chronicled by previous historians, with most being a negative interpretation of it. To illustrate, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent end of the Cold War was chronicled and lauded by many American and Western historians as a triumph for the West and democracy, where most American historians fully crediting the USA for bringing down the Communist colossus. This thinking persisted due to the dominance of the USA as the only superpower in the post-Cold War era, preeminent in [economic] and geopolitical terms. However, with the series of political and military blunders of the USA in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia from the late 1990s to the present day, [causing] American superiority [to be] humiliated, American historians have been swift to create alternate historical narratives that reviewed the collapse of the Soviet Union not as a feat of American superiority, but the culmination of different factors, such as internal economic problems of the Soviet Union and Mr Gorbachev's political reforms. This shows how, far from constructing historical narratives that support their own victorious state, historians from the victorious state themselves will review existing narratives and often criticise or revise them in a way that will no longer favour themselves as the victorious state.</p>	<p>Salient observation, but why this review of history happens can be further examined - is it because the 'victor' has lost its legitimacy? Or is the 'victor' purposefully changing the narrative - which would imply they are still in control?</p>
<p>Detractors argue, however, that history can only be written by the victorious, given their physical and political dominance over the vanquished, <b>often brought about by extermination of the defeated</b>. Such examples include the Armenian Genocide by the Turkish Ottoman Empire that has resulted in a minute and fractionalised appreciation and understanding of Armenian culture and society, even in the modern age. However, this view is quite limited as it is presumed upon the basis of total extermination of the vanquished. That is, however, not feasible and often unattainable. Despite launching three different military campaigns against the Acehnese rebels from 1910 to 1935, the Dutch were unable to prevent the propagation of an alternate Acehnese historical [narrative].</p>	<p>Another consideration could be whether extermination really can stamp out all alternative narratives, in the presence of possible hidden records or sympathisers</p>

(Wang Yi Sheng, 18-12)

**9 'Nature should always give way to the forces of urbanisation.' How true is this of your society?**

*This response raises a variety of relevant points which are strongly grounded in an understanding of the unique context of Singapore, with an interesting thesis that challenges the question's assumption of a dichotomous relationship between nature and urbanisation. It takes a broad view of what 'nature' is, including in its purview any greenery manipulated by Singapore into serving our own purposes, whereas a stricter view of the keyword may find that many of the points here can be interpreted as nature being sacrificed in favour of a more constructed and controlled form that fits into our urbanisation plans. The writing is consistently clear, signposted and well organised throughout, such that the direction of the argument is always clear.*

When one thinks of urbanisation in Singapore, they may think of the Central Business District, Biopolis or even the humble Housing Development Board (HDB) flats in which over eighty percent of Singaporeans reside. Very rarely do images of wild, untamed jungles or even perfectly potted plants come to mind. In fact, some may even go as far as to perceive nature as the antithesis of urbanisation. However, I believe this question poses a false dichotomy by suggesting that nature and urbanisation cannot coexist. From what I observe in Singapore, nature and urbanisation are not two mutually exclusive concepts, but rather concepts that serve to complement each other to achieve the end goal of continued progress. Hence, this statement is untrue to a large extent in the context of Singapore, Southeast Asia's 'Garden City'.

Challenging the assumption in the question that the relationship between nature and urbanisation is dichotomous

Relevant features of the context of the question are usefully acknowledged

Some may argue that urbanisation should always take precedence over the conservation of nature in our society due to the need to stay competitive and relevant in such a volatile economic climate where financial crises can occur at any time. Singapore holds its pride in the stratospheric development of the economic sector over the past half-century, elevating Singapore's Third World status to that of a First World country which is largely recognised as Southeast Asia's largest trading hub. In the past, it can be seen from late Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew's blueprints that in order to achieve the future he envisioned for Singapore, hectares upon hectares of jungles would have to be cleared to make way for monolithic office buildings and HDB flats. Proponents of this argument often raise that since Singapore's nature has been sacrificed in the past for urbanisation, and the results have evidently proven successful, nature should always take less precedence over urbanisation in order to continue achieving economic and developmental success. However, I believe that this is too myopic a view, which only measures success using the economic scale and not in other arenas such as the creative arts sector. While Singapore's economy is thriving, its creative arts sector is doing considerably worse. Success of a country should not be measured by the economic growth or the Gross Domestic Product of a country, but rather by how well the country is doing in all sectors as well as the citizens' quality of life. Furthermore, sacrificing nature for urban development does not necessarily contribute to economic growth. There is no direct link between the two, hence it would be presumptuous to assume that just by sacrificing nature to make way for urban development, Singapore's economy can continue to grow and remain competitive. Instead, the focus should be on how to better utilise existing spaces, rather than on clearing plots of land to build more buildings.

In addition, strong proponents of urbanisation may claim that the unwillingness of our

<p>country's government to clear nature reserves is an unwise move and potentially an impediment in the goal of improving citizens' quality of life. Some claim that by preserving nature reserves, we are in fact sacrificing our quality of life. In 2016, a key area of discussion was the construction of the planned Cross Island Line, which could potentially save [commuters] an hour of travel time. One of the proposed track alignments cut through the Bukit Timah nature reserve, while another track alignment skirted around it, but added five minutes to travel time. In a fast-paced society like Singapore, [waiting for five minutes] is a great deal of time. Hence, this conflict between conservation of flora and fauna and efficiency in terms of time savings was posed, leading to divided opinions between transport experts as well as ordinary citizens. Those who supported the track alignment cutting through the nature reserve viewed the loss of nature as worth it in order to attain a higher quality of life, and felt that in this case, nature should give way to the forces of urbanisation. However, I believe there is a strong reason why the government has chosen to preserve nature, even if it means forsaking economic development and time savings in the short run. Singapore has crafted an image of a 'City in a Garden', to distinguish itself from other urban metropolises which usually sacrifice nature for urbanisation. Hence, simply destroying nature for urban development will be going against the goals Singapore had set for itself pre-urbanisation, which was to create a cohesive environment in which nature and urbanisation could harmoniously coexist. As such, I believe that nature should not always give way to urbanisation, even if urbanisation offers attractive benefits like time savings.</p>	<p>Interesting argument that to sacrifice nature for further urbanisation would be antithetical to Singapore's desired image</p>
<p>Clearly, there is a reason why Singapore has not sacrificed nature in the face of rapid economic development and urbanisation. What benefits could nature bring to citizens and the country in order to motivate the government to continue preserving it?</p>	
<p>One reason could be that nature provides a sanctuary from the hectic modern-day lifestyles of most Singaporeans. The fast-paced development has undoubtedly brought about increased stress and [longer] working hours. Coupled with the highly competitive workforce of Singapore, where imports of foreign labour continually threaten locals' job security, Singaporeans need an escape from the hustle [and] bustle of city life once in a while. It can be argued that parks do offer a sense of escapism, as they often seem detached from the concrete-filled environment we are used to. The government has also built parks in built up metropolitan areas for this very one reason. Think One-North Park located in the heart of One-North, a thriving area dedicated to scientific research. Employees can go for a short run after work to relieve stress due to the release of endorphins. Large nature reserves have also been conserved in order to protect the untainted, natural beauty of Singapore. One such example is MacRitchie Reservoir, which remains largely untouched by urbanisation. Many citizens visit to engage in water activities like kayaking, or just to run along the dirt paths while breathing in fresh (and hopefully unpolluted) air. Hence, [nature's] ability to provide such an accessible form of escapism for the common citizen is testament to the importance of preserving it and not sacrificing it in the face of urbanisation.</p>	
<p>Another possible reason why nature should not always give way to the forces of urbanisation is the fact that Singapore does rely on ecotourism to generate profits. Singapore is famed for its attractions which incorporate both nature and urbanisation, such as the widely known Gardens by the Bay. At Gardens by the Bay, visitors can view a large variety of flowers and plants from all over the world, which are kept in a gigantic air-conditioned glass and metal dome. Hence, this shows the integration of nature into modern design, and how much the</p>	<p>This is not exactly 'ecotourism', since that is to do with natural, rather than man-made attractions. The point is, however, valid</p>

<p>government tries to incorporate nature – one of our defining features – into the design of buildings. Another more recent example is Jewel at Changi, which will be completed in 2019, and will serve as a one-stop entertainment destination for both Singaporeans and tourists passing through Singapore. The Jewel at Changi will feature canopies of trees and even a sky bridge to allow visitors to view tall trees up close. Hence, the incorporation of nature into design shows once again the value of nature as well as striking a balance between nature and urban development. These two examples are especially poignant due to the fact that tourists are the main visitors of these two attractions. This highlights the government’s willingness to present Singapore as a destination in which nature and urbanisation are not in conflict, but rather, live in harmony. This further shows how the government believes in the importance of preserving nature amidst rapid urbanisation. Hence, it can be observed that Singapore’s economy does depend on nature, and the eradication of such nature-based attractions will invariably have a negative effect on the economy of Singapore.</p>	
<p>In conclusion, I believe that nature should not always give way to the forces of urbanisation, especially due to the benefits it is able to bring about. Instead, nature can be used as a supplement to urbanisation, for they are not mutually exclusive. The assumption in the question that nature cannot coexist with urbanisation is deeply flawed, and hence I believe it is largely untrue in the context of Singapore. The importance of nature is one that cannot be undermined by the forces of urbanisation, for it is essential in achieving our long-term goal of sustained progress, both in terms of economic development and citizens’ quality of life.</p> <p><i>(Chelsea Leong, 18-13)</i></p>	<p>References to the characteristics of Singapore that lead to such a thesis could be reinforced in this conclusion, so there is no doubt that the response is well informed by knowledge of the context</p>

**9 'Nature should always give way to the forces of urbanisation.' How true is this of your society?**

*This essay is immediately striking in its use of language: an impressive and masterfully wielded vocabulary, the use of figurative language and imagery, and sophistication and variety in sentence structures stylishly convey the substance of the essay in a voice that is unique to the writer. The substance of the essay is similarly commendable, where there is care taken to connect the larger ideas of urbanisation and conservation of nature with the unique context of Singapore, particularly early on in the essay, thereby enabling the question requirements to be successfully met. Its credibility is bolstered with detailed and intelligently developed examples, while its coherence and cogency are never in doubt with the logical organisation of ideas and the use of signposting and connectors to demarcate this logic for the reader.*

Singapore has made a quantum leap from a poor fishing village in the 1800s to the stunning cosmopolitan city that it is today, frequently topping global indices for our prosperity and quality of life. This commendable success can be largely attributed to the forces of urbanization, where Singapore has opened its doors to globalization and modernization, prioritizing the urgent need for economic growth and development to feed the demands of its people. However, this economic dynamism has come with a price to pay – Singapore often struggles with the dilemma of compromising our nature to suit the urgent requirements of our modern society. As such, while many Singaporeans may demonstrate a seeming apathy in bulldozing our nature for the sake of pragmatism and economic growth, I believe that nature should not always be sacrificed for urbanization in our society because nature brings about extensive benefits and can always be incorporated in our modern society to complement urbanization.

Thesis statement properly reconciles the points in the essay (pragmatism vs. benefits of nature)

The unfortunate reality of the situation lies in the fact that pragmatism trumps the sentimental overtures of the preservation of nature. This is especially prominent in Singapore, a geographically small island which battles with insufficient land and scarcity of resources, in conjunction with a high population density. More often than not, nature, which is inadequate in fulfilling the demands of urbanization, poses as an obstacle to the progress and development of our society, hence calling for its need to be eradicated, or at least sidelined. Its secondary nature is evident during the construction of the Cross-Island Line on our Little Red Dot. This transport line, which sought to reduce travelling time, provide greater convenience and alleviate traffic congestion, resulted in the sacrifice of part of the Bukit Timah Central Catchment Reserve. This nature reserve, located near MacRitchie Reservoir, was a home to a wide range of flora, fauna and frondescence. Despite the cries of protest of many local environmentalists, it is inevitable for the government to prioritise the economic and social benefits of the Cross-Island Line over the protection of our greenery. In addition, Singapore's government was presented with an alternative solution to ameliorate the deleterious impacts on nature – to construct a longer transportation line alongside the Nature Reserve. Unfortunately, due to the additional costs involved, it is evident that urbanization and the need for a robust infrastructural economy still has a stranglehold over our nature today. Many hold on to the stand that functionality trumps nature. Therefore, due to our limited geographical size and urgent need to address other pressing demands like urbanization, it is justified and true that nature should give way for the sake of pragmatism, in order to put our scarce land and resources to a more productive use.

A useful phrase to express personal voice about an issue without sounding too melodramatic

Good comparison between the benefits and costs of this project, which makes things clear

Food for thought: Due to these features, nature is subjected to the same benchmarks of functionality as our tools - should it be?

<p>However, this does not mark the metaphorical nail in the coffin for nature as many Singaporeans adopt a more sanguine attitude towards its development and value. Naysayers decry that nature is an indispensable and precious way of life that will bring about catastrophic consequences if it were to be replaced with brick and mortar. Alluding to the previous dilemma of the Cross-Island Line, the construction unfortunately resulted in the death of many animal and botanical species. The clearance of natural land was for construction and necessitated deforestation, which not only deprived many animals of their homes, but also unfortunately caused soil erosion and changes to the composition of water streams in the forests. Another prime example is the issue of the haze that not only plagued our neighbouring country Indonesia, but impacted our Little Red Dot extensively as well. In order to accommodate the needs of the modern world and the increasing demand for palm oil, Indonesia resorted to 'slash-and-burn' techniques in Kalimantan forests. Singapore, however, is not entirely an innocent party as our consumption of seemingly-harmless everyday items like toothpaste, largely contributed to the demand for palm oil. As a result, Singapore battled with poor air pollution with PSI levels inching to dangerously high levels for weeks on end. Evidently, nature cannot always be sidelined for urbanization because the disadvantages may greatly outweigh the benefits. Singapore has experienced the cataclysmic impacts of the complete eradication of nature. In our attempt to increase our supply for palm oil to suit our economy at the expense of nature, we unknowingly exacerbated the problem. Hence, nature should not always give way to the forces of urbanization due to the potential harms involved.</p>	<p>The repercussions of the act of urbanisation are fully explored, with a variety of contexts brought up, demonstrating good knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to use it to strengthen arguments</p>
<p>Lastly, I hold strongly to the belief that nature should not always be sidelined to accommodate to our modern society because nature can always be incorporated to complement urbanization. Admittedly, the increasing need for a progressive and robust infrastructural economy is a reality in the face of globalization and modernity. Yet, we should not neglect the essential value of nature as it is ultimately an important aspect of our lives. With the advancement of technology and surplus of innovative entrepreneurs, it is possible for nature and urbanization to come hand-in-hand. Singapore's very own Zero Energy Building serves as a prime example, as evident from our incorporation of nature into its infrastructure. It boasts a magnificent Green Wall, where botany had been introduced not simply for aesthetic appeal, but for pragmatic functions like keeping our building cool in our unbearable heat, as well as raising awareness about the importance of the preservation of nature. In addition, nature also complements urbanization, as evident from our utilization of natural wind to produce wind energy to meet the demands of people. While I understand the prevalence of urbanization in our 21<sup>st</sup> century, I am inclined to believe that nature and modernity are not mutually exclusive. Singapore boasts impressive technology and advancements, and is all the more capable of introducing elements of nature into urbanization, therefore gaining the best of both worlds by neither compromising on pragmatism nor preservation.</p>	<p>While many candidates attempted to synthesise the conservation of nature and urbanisation, most did not comprehensively unpack their functions, as is done fairly successfully here</p>
<p>In conclusion, the forces of urbanization [are] especially essential for the progress and prosperity of our island. Due to our high population density and the urgent need for survival on a global scale, it is inevitable for Singapore to constantly revamp and revitalize our nation, eradicating impediments to growth and converting lands for more productive and efficient uses. As such, it is no secret that some Singaporeans are merely paying lip service to the charms of nature. However, these people are but dissentients as many still support the preservation and protection of nature, as it should not be a secondary priority even in the</p>	<p>The reality of the situation is juxtaposed against the ideal outcome, and this essay's response is elevated to one that is a call</p>

face of urbanization. Hence, my belief that nature should not always give way to the forces of urbanization still stands in my society.

*(Cherilyn Lee, 18-11)*

to action, reinforcing  
its personal voice



**10 'The study of literature serves little purpose in society.' Discuss.**

<p><i>This essay's treatment of the topic of literature centres around some of the key capabilities that are honed by the study of literature. This is done clearly and largely convincingly, with adequate illustrations that demonstrate a comfort with the topic. However, most of these arguments fall just short of explaining exactly how these capabilities developed by literature are functional and purposeful in society, which is assumed in the essay, rather than argued. Finally, the thesis of the essay is interesting, and provides a central argument that is meant to tie the points together, but this can be done with slightly more clarity, by explaining how linguistic ability, socio-political understanding and empathy serve to make students of literature 'more human', and then ultimately how being 'more human' is of purpose in society.</i></p>	
<p>As the world makes its way into an increasingly digital and technological age, many begin to question the roles of non-scientific subjects in modern times. While it may be true that technology is rendering certain arts-oriented subjects and skill sets irrelevant, however, literature is a subject that has a significant purpose in society. Literature serves to be a tool to develop linguistic ability, an arena for discussions on socio-political issues and an avenue to develop [the quality of empathy]. All of these purposes of the study of literature outweigh the argument that it serves little purpose in society, because these benefits are crucial in helping us remain human in a machine-driven world.</p>	<p>Stand is clear but thesis could be further explained – 'remain[ing] human' is a little vague</p>
<p>Firstly, studying literature can hone one's linguistic ability. The various styles of writing and self-expression are encapsulated in the many ways that literature can be manifested in, from prose to poetry and plays. Students of literature can develop their linguistic ability, by examining the sentence structures, diction and expression of the writer, while cultivating an appreciation for the language it is written in. For instance, the Shakespeare Lives programme in England teaches participants about the beauty of the English language and increases their knowledge about English Literature, particularly through the works of Shakespeare. [An] in-depth study of literary works also hones the skills of critical analysis, a core competency of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The fact that Shakespeare's works continue to be celebrated today, shows that literature has a role as a means for honing one's linguistic ability in both past and present societies. Thus, literature has an important function in society.</p>	<p>Argument could have been better developed, such as by elaborating on why linguistic ability is purposeful in society</p> <p>Could have explained why this is a 'core competency of the 21st century'</p>
<p>Secondly, literature works serve as avenues for students to better understand the socio-political tensions at play in their society, creating topics for fruitful discussions. Most of the time, students do not witness acts of socio-political injustice, but hear of it through news reports. Through literary pieces, the students may be able to better understand the issues rampant in their society and beyond, as the writers vividly flesh out the emotions and friction of the issue, with their eloquent use of language. For example, in Singapore, renowned local playwright, Ivan Heng, [] initiated the Wild Rice Theatre Festival, as a platform for nascent playwrights to showcase their works. A notable number of plays touched on sensitive issues that many Singaporeans face, pertaining to socio-political matters. In the case of "Supervision", it revolves around the animosity [between] affluent Singaporeans and their foreign domestic workers; such plays touch on the "hard truths" of Singapore society, because many a time[], it gets swept under the carpet, to uphold Singapore's reputation as a "harmonious, [multiracial] nation". Hence, by studying literature, students can engage in meaningful conversations and grasp a deeper understanding of the problems plaguing their society and thus the study of literature has a significant role to play in society.</p>	<p>Strong and relevant point</p> <p>This argument can be taken further by considering what benefits can come out of such a better understanding</p> <p>Links back to the question, but is Literature the only field from which this can be learned?</p>
<p>On the other hand, as our society develops socially [and economically], some might argue</p>	

<p>that [] we are headed towards a technologically-integrated world and the role of literature is not as necessary anymore. Other subjects that require students to examine texts like History, can also develop critical analysis and thinking skills, so why the specific need for Literature? Moreover, the economy is in high demand for skills related to computer coding and financial technology (FinTech), because of the digitisation of many processes in the move towards a tech-driven economy. Take the case of the banking industry, for example, [where] established institutions like the United Overseas Bank are looking to hire employees with strong backgrounds in technologically-related industries. The rise of technology has also taken over jobs that require the skill sets acquired by literature students like lawyers. Artificial intelligence agency, LawGeex, has developed softwares that provides legal advice of accuracy up to 94%, while human lawyers only give 81% of accurate advice. Such examples show how literature has very little importance in society, especially in today's modern era.</p>	<p>This shows more of how other skills are important too, rather than addressing how important Literature is to society</p>
<p>However, as the world leans towards a future where we interact with machinery a lot more frequently, there is a pressing need for us to retain our sense of humanity, which can be achieved through literature. Studying literature allows one to cultivate a sense of empathy, as writers skilfully choose these words and use powerful and vivid imagery to convey their message across to the reader. Such employment of language effectively stimulates empathy from readers, especially in poignant and heart-warming works like the Diary of Anne Frank. Studies have shown that studying literature does indeed aid in the development of emotional intelligence as readers place themselves in the person's perspective and feels for the persona. This development of a common quality, like empathy, can be honed more strongly in literature than other subjects, as the reader is made to analyse the writer's emotions and intentions through his study. It is vital in retaining our humanistic nature and quality as we become a technologically-integrated society and literature is an important tool in helping us to do so. Therefore, literature has an important role in society.</p>	<p>Clear explanation</p>
<p>In all, literature's role in society, both olden and modern, [is] very significant. Despite the enduring needs of the economy, literature does not serve one sole purpose, but many important functions that aid us in our linguistic ability, social development and emotional capacity. Hence, the study of literature serves a major role in society, especially in keeping the human race "human" and not be obsessed over technological advancement and progress.</p> <p>(Clare Lim, 18-12)</p>	<p>Conclusion seems a little rushed - could have elaborated further</p>

**10 'The study of literature serves little purpose in society.' Discuss.**

<p><i>This essay is a trove of unique insight into the study of literature that manages to consider the relevant areas of discussion intimated by the question beyond a superficial level. The array of illustration is often developed in unusual detail and with clarity, and combined with the salient evaluation results in compelling arguments. There can however be more rigour in the contextualising of why society needs the benefits from the study of literature, instead of stopping at the benefits that the study of literature can afford. The use of language is effective on the whole, though more finesse in the choice of diction to convey subtleties of meaning more accurately is possible.</i></p>	
<p>The study of literature to some seems futile at best. What with the lack of logic and leap[s] to conclusions based on one's subjective analysis of a passage, it [could be] easily concluded that when push comes to shove, literature has little utility in our world today. However, I would instead argue that literature tackles with the human mind, something that is deemed [not] worthwhile understanding in society[,] but instead draws out all the reasons why literature is so useful.</p>	<p>Introduction is quite bare. Why Literature is so quickly dismissed can be expanded on slightly more here</p>
<p>Pessimists often claim that being as subjective as interpretations of a passage [are] in literature, it goes against societal beliefs in pursuing what is certain. The certainty of [the] sciences and its qualitative studies, many argue, is what drives society forward and has catalysed our development in the global sphere. They claim that the world has benefited most from pursuing concrete ideology and from using data and research to continue to push our scientific realms to greater heights. Without these [mechanisms] or focus on areas which are driven by reason and cold hard facts, our world would have never progressed this rapidly. Furthermore, all major stages in which the world has progressed [are] mostly categorised by vast improvements in society. The mechanisation of manual labour in the 1800s followed by developments in transport such that sea travel became largely [irrelevant] as well as the creation of mass media in the globalisation phase come to mind when one questions how the world has changed these couple of years. Certainly, the quantitative and subjective study of literature cannot be said to have vastly changed our worldview in ways which the study of logic and facts have.</p>	<p>This opposing perspective is given weight through being well developed and illustrated. However, it does not diminish the possibility of the study of literature also serving a purpose in society</p>
<p>This then ties in nicely to the conclusion that literature is not merely the study of feelings but is logical as well. The skills in literature, such as identifying patterns and analysing the different texts can play a large role in society by giving us the wisdom required in continual development in society. While development in technology is seen in the past few decades as being a large factor which deems the study of literature as useless, studying [] literature allows us to develop our minds logically. Connecting the dots based on our [diaspora] has been the emphasis in the study of literature. Technical skills that teach us how to narrow out the differences in the text and [the] use of contrast or subjugative techniques of juxtaposition and run-on lines give us breadth and depth to our minds, allowing us to think in patterns and thus develop a frame of logic. While the methods of creating our thought processes through literature is a wide berth from the skills required in [the] sciences, the thought processes that are initiated from this study [are] useful to society as it teaches us how to think differently. By having the ability to deviate [our] thinking in a different way[, it] provides a uniqueness to society[,] which will fundamentally aid [the] progress of society because society will not progress if we fail to pick up these logical skills that can be picked up from the study of literature.</p>	<p>What such a uniqueness serves should be elaborated on, otherwise the argument is incomplete</p> <p>Why logical skills are useful in society and why literature is a prime way to pick them up can be expanded on</p>
<p>The study of literature is also largely based on the study of the human mind and ultimately</p>	

<p>reflects one's own identity, which society has been searching for. The books that we read today, and [their] characters[,] can all be portrayed as an author's figment of imagination. Ultimately, these characters all represent the author's thought process and fundamentally, [the] different facades of herself or people that have influenced her. Ultimately, society can relate to the different representations of oneself in the myriad of literature texts today. As Amy Tan draws upon and develops the characters of the different mothers in her book, 'The Joy Luck Club', she herself has said that these mothers all contain the hopes and dreams that her own mother [had] represented. While not being the exact same, the identities that have been expanded on in these literature texts give us [the] liberty and wisdom on [how] our nuanced identity works. Using 'The Joy Luck Club' once again, we see how Rose Hsu, a subservient young woman with little proactiveness, is [resigned] to her lack of will and passive self[,] resulting in her husband [doing] 'monkey business' outside. This portrayal of different characters [gives] society [an] in-depth [analysis of] how we may act as well. Furthermore, our study of characters in [books] aid[s] our search [for] our sense of self. In society today, our race in pushing towards unstoppable heights in attaining success has obliterated the need to ponder about our state of mind. Categorised by the rising statistics in our fast cascading lack of control over our mind, society today has yielded [] many more mental illnesses than in the past few decades. This lack of mental awareness can be brought to light by the study of self in literature as it expands our mind to the different human personas, providing insight on how we think and [the] reasons behind why we do things.</p>	<p>More substantiation is necessary for the implication that the study of literature might help deal with rising rates of mental illness</p>
<p>Furthermore, studying literature ties us back to our history and grounds us. In society today, whereby a multitude of new buildings are appearing at uncontrolled speed and [the] tearing down of historical [artefacts] simply [symbolises] better use of space, we are simply left desensitised to our changing arena and have not given our roots proper consideration. While many argue that by looking at our past, there is no present, I beg to differ. By seeing where we have come from and looking at how the human race or the world has changed, we can gather insight and thus society can benefit from this development. Literature [from] different time frames encapsulate[s] the human condition at that time, giving us the knowledge of how the world had been in the past. Albeit literature texts [are fictional], many scenarios and figures of speech have remained representative of the world in that period of time. By studying these texts, we gather knowledge about the world steeped in that time frame by default. For example, books by Charlotte Bronte, a female writer in the 1900s[,] often depict [] masculinised version[s] of men and subsequently the belittlement of women[, who] act as prey being hunted by men []. These stereotypes can be traced back from then [] and [literature] serves to remind us of the lack of power or say females wielded back then, giving us great comfort in our progress as societal norms have loosened and woman now have greater autonomy [than] ever. This incites the need for society to continually progress. Furthermore, [the] study of literature in books such as 'The Diary of Anne Frank' give us [an] accurate narrative of the past and allow for insight in how the [Jews], particularly Anne's family[,] felt in those dark times [when] Adolf Hitler relentlessly persecuted the Jews and great tragedy struck[,] in terms of the millions of deaths that [had] occurred.</p>	<p>How exactly society can benefit from this can be further developed</p> <p>The purpose the study of literature serves here can be reiterated for greater clarity</p>
<p>The study of literature also gives our society greater autonomy. As society becomes modernised, our emphasis on individualism has become more pronounced and is marked by our [withdrawal] from belonging to a certain group such as a country or a church. The study of literature advances our position for greater autonomy because it gives us a greater sense of solitude and defines who we are. As we progress in studying a text, we are often drawn back to who we fundamentally are as people. In Elizabeth Cady Stanton's last speech before</p>	

<p>her retirement as the first president of the National Woman Suffrage [Association], she claim[ed] that two blades of grass will never be the same and uses these subjects to symbolise the uniqueness of two human souls. She says that a human soul in itself is infinite and how [] it would be traitorous for us to take away another's solitude of self. By reading into literature texts, such as these, we understand and identify our own worth of nuance and this pushes society toward higher attainment of their own life, thus awakening our climb to societal need for individualism and autonomy.</p>	<p>Whether this is a purpose that advances society or goes against it is worth considering</p>
<p>In Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, he theorises that each human being cannot be classified [by] a single measurement of IQ, but instead, argues that we have different intelligences, including spatial, body movement and importantly, literary intelligence. Our development in the ability to understand texts, analyse various patterns and reading between the line[s] by utilising technical literary techniques in [the study of literature] has a large role in advancing society and giving us great insight, thus it is still useful today.</p> <p><i>(Janessa Yik, 18-E2)</i></p>	<p>Conclusion appears to be rushed</p>

**11 ‘Some professions are more highly regarded than others.’ Discuss this claim with reference to your society.**

*This essay demonstrates a perceptiveness and an ability to both recognise and communicate nuance. It examines the reasons that underlie the different levels of regard that different professions possess. While the discussion is relevant, the essay can be strengthened with a more consistent attempt to account for how the features of Singapore society have resulted in such a reality. Further contextualisation beyond just the first paragraph will enable a more insightful glimpse into the workings of beliefs, culture and power in Singapore society.*

What if someone said they looked at construction workers the same way they look at lawyers? What if a friend said that he wanted to become an artist instead of a doctor? These ideas [might] sound illogical to most of us as these professions are jobs we [may have never] thought about doing [in the future]. So what would happen if there [was] not any bias towards certain professions?

In a meritocratic society like Singapore[,], where the people are academically driven to soar to greater heights, people are always driven to find what they call a ‘better’ job. They believe that by having these ‘better’ jobs as their occupation[,], they can succeed in life because that is how things usually work, or at least that is what society believes. In my opinion, while it is undeniable that certain professions are more highly regarded than others due to the way my society has been constructed, fuelled by the increasing[ly] elitist[] point of view, all professions can be regarded in the same light as all of them serve a common purpose.

How society has been ‘constructed’ should be explained

Some professions are more highly regarded than others because of the way society perceives them to be. [White-collar] professions such as doctors, lawyers and other high-paying jobs are often, if not [always], considered to be better than [blue-collar] occupations such as construction workers, waiters and hawkers. The white-collar occupations are perceived as important jobs that support[] the economy and the backbone of the country, whereby their contributions and actions are often significant and praised. Not only are these jobs less tiring than blue-collar jobs that often require manual labour, they are more respectable and elevate one’s social status because of the glorified image that society has [placed on] these occupations. For instance, we would often see television dramas that portray certain professions doing things that we as [children] thought [were] absolutely fascinating and amazing to do. [A] forensic [scientist] is one of these professions where one can perform medical [autopsies] on dead bodies in order to find out what really occurred at the crime scene. [The skill and detective work present represents the intelligence of those working in the field of forensic science.] In the same way [that] forensic science is portrayed as a [field] that requires more skill and knowledge than others, white-collar occupations like doctors often have their contributions and notable moments of saving people’s lives broadcasted on television or appear on the news, something that the blue-collar jobs rarely get the opportunity to do. A Mandarin channel in Singapore used to broadcast a show featuring two of its hosts experiencing different types of occupations for a day. One of them would go to the ‘worse and tougher’ job while [the other would] go to the ‘cool and easier’ job. The hosts would often share their experience and knowledge gained from the job with the audience. In that sense, the society has formed an unconscious bias in our minds towards certain jobs that would not guarantee us a bright future or jobs that we would not enjoy doing because of its manual workload. With this bias formed within our minds through society’s perception, it is inevitable that certain professions are more highly regarded than others.

The point of this illustration should be brought out, since on its own it contributes little to a reader’s understanding of the argument. It could be pointed out that the fact that the show can unproblematically categorise these professions suggests that wider society clearly delineates these jobs also

It is also no wonder that white-collar workers are often perceived as having better jobs than blue collar workers due to the prevalence of elitism in my society. Since its independence in 1965, the late Prime Minister then, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, mentioned that Singaporeans have to work hard in order to survive on its own and since then, many ministers have repeated the

<p>same message that Singapore, having close to no natural resources, can [] rely on its only resource [– its people]. We are urged to continuously work hard, to never rest on our laurels and we will be rewarded with success when our hard work pays off. In this case, while it may be a good driving force that pushes citizens to work hard for their survival when Singapore was a developing Third-World country, it spreads the message that the less well-off or people who are [working blue-collar jobs] are there because they did not work hard enough and they ‘deserve’ [the position] they are in. Thus our parents have always warned us since young to study hard and get a good paying job in this competitive society so that we will not get looked down on. In this sense, education that was meant to push all [] students to achieve better results and [lessen] the inequality only widened the gap between the high-income jobs and the low-income [labour-intensive] jobs and strengthened society’s elitist point of view. As a result, an invisible ladder of social status is formed within my society[,] where certain blue-collar occupations are regarded with little respect and the better paying white-collar jobs are [at] the top of the ladder. Hence, it is undeniable that there is truth within the claim that some professions are more highly regarded than others due to the nature of how my society perceives certain professions above others.</p>	<p>This is tautological - the reason why society perceives these professions in this manner would be more useful</p>
<p>However, optimists may have different perceptions on the matter, stating that all professions deserve to be of equal standing and treated in the same light because [] the nature of all [] jobs [] is to serve the nation together. In terms of contribution [], despite the difference in the monetary value different jobs bring to the table, they all have the shared purpose of serving the nation and to continue developing Singapore in one way or another. This way, regardless of the occupation, they should be considered with the same respect and treatment. Yet, [people of this opinion] may fail to consider that [some] professions are [more] highly regarded compared to other[s] in terms of the social and political power they bring. White-collar occupations often hold a degree of authority that is able to directly impact a person’s life[, in a manner that is not possible for a someone with a blue-collar job. While a lawyer would be able to clear someone framed for a crime of his guilt and thus regain that individual’s freedom, a construction worker can only help build facilities that would not connect to people in the same way, even though his work would benefit us indirectly. This is due to the difference in power and authority between the two types of jobs.]</p>	
<p>All in all, it is inevitable that some professions are more highly regarded than others because of the nature of the jobs and how society perceives them. Despite all [this], all professions [serve] to contribute to the nation and while the claim is applicable [to] my society, it is definitely worth treating [all] occupations with more equality in the future to come.</p> <p><i>(Teo Yee Shuen, 18-A4)</i></p>	

**11 ‘Some professions are more highly regarded than others.’ Discuss this claim with reference to your society.**

<p><i>This is an insightful, mature and engaging discussion with relevant and nuanced ideas which have been expressed fluently and confidently. The first two body paragraphs are highly commendable, being very well contextualised to Singapore, and examining the issue at some depth. However, this depth and attention to context is not sustained in the rest of the essay, which leads to the impression of hastiness towards the end. Nevertheless, the points raised are valid, and on the whole the essay is a great effort.</i></p>	
<p>While professions are simply career paths undertaken by an individual as a means of contributing to society and earning a living, the prescribed meanings that society places on each and every role has placed unequal value on their contributions[,] leading to some more popular career paths being viewed as more desirable than others. In the context of my meritocratic society, economic fixation and conservative thinking [serve] as yardsticks to measure the value of each profession, causing this claim to be true to a large extent.</p>	
<p>The overwhelming economic fixation in my society causes the income of each profession to be the determining factor of the value and desirability of each job. In Singapore, the narrative of its evolution from a small fishing village to [its] First World status and the hardships of the pioneer generation is a compelling one that is frequently repeated, both locally and in the international scene. This shapes the perception that economic success is a key feature of Singapore and inculcates the value of the financial economy in its citizens. Likewise, this belief cascades into the everyday life of its citizens in which the headline news of the main newspaper in Singapore, ‘The Straits Times’, constantly updates its citizens on its economic development and how it fares alongside its surrounding neighbours. [This consequently discounts] the intrinsic value of each profession, reducing it to only its economic assets measured in the form of its salary. As such[, traditionally] high-paying jobs such as bankers and business owners are well regarded in my society as they have become [the epitome] of success which many strive to become. This is manifested in our own homes where the appraisal of such jobs by parents and relatives cause young children to be socialised to perceive such jobs as the definition of a successful career.</p>	<p>Well contextualised</p> <p>Going down to the level of the underlying beliefs that fuel such perceptions brings insight to the economic valuing of the professions that is observable on the surface</p>
<p>Secondly, as a meritocratic society, [] people holding these traditionally successful jobs are deemed to possess innate latent or superior intelligence. In theory, the most deserving and [able] party would gain the highly sought after spot in [a] well-renowned company [<i>illegible</i>]. The accomplishments of an individual in progressing up the ladder of success will be credited to their sheer hard work and abilities. Certain characteristics are attached to the career paths, such as doctors being ‘smart’ or ‘hard working’ as oversimplified generalisations. Therefore, [these shape] the perceptions of society regarding these careers, as they associate the professionals with the outstanding attributes of the professions. However, not all [of] such attributes can be attached to every individual in that profession and it would be unjust to designate a sweeping statement to all individuals as such positive attributes may not be unique to only the traditionally successful career paths[, but] can [also] be found in every [other] field. [For example,] a top performer or artist would have also poured in countless hours of hard work and displayed credible creative intelligence in their respective art forms. Thus, while the common views and implications on each career stands, it is myopic to exclusively prescribe desirable traits as a characteristic of all professionals in their professions.</p>	
<p>The difference [with regard to] various professions is [manifested] in daily interactions, giving rise to relational inequality. Relational inequality is the difference in treatment of an individual based on how others deem he should be treated based on their beliefs, giving rise to preferential treatment and prejudice. This is evident from the general view of [blue-collar]</p>	



<p>workers such as construction workers, maids and cleaners. There have been incidents where these workers are disrespected, such as past incidents of maid abuse, or even the unfounded belief of certain citizens that migrant blue-collar workers should give up their seats for healthy and [able] Singaporeans [while riding the] public transport system. While such views are rare, the presence of such beliefs undermines the [advocacy] of [the] truly gracious society that Singapore is working towards. Perhaps the issue lies in citizens' ability to look past the superficial aspect of [] social status regarding these jobs and [instead] treat all members of society as valuable individuals.</p>	<p>The relevance of this idea to the topic is tenuous, though it can be argued that such treatment can be the norm and perpetuates the social order</p>
<p>Lastly, although some professions may be more highly regarded than others[,] we cannot discount the fact that other professions play an equally crucial role in the development of [] Singapore society. For example, the cleaners that ensure [the] cleanliness of our green city help to maintain Singapore's beautiful streets[,] hence earning us the title of one of the cleanest cities in the world. While they do not play a direct role in Singapore's economic development[,] which is prized by many, they hold important complementary and supporting roles without which we would be unable to function at full capacity.</p>	
<p>As illustrated in the play 'The Day of Absence', in which all the Black workers of a fictional town mysteriously disappear[, the] value of each and every role in society is indeed valuable[,] and that realisation would not come to light unless we really experience operating without them. Such preferential treatment surrounding certain professions unfortunately holds true in the present. However, I believe that as Singapore progresses towards become a gracious society, such beliefs would wear out, promoting better and fairer treatment for all.</p> <p><i>(Cham Jay Yin, 18-U4)</i></p>	

## 12 'The best test of a civilised society is the way in which it treats its animals.'

### Discuss.

*This essay is a greatly thoughtful response that makes the most out of the opportunity for insight afforded by the question. In the use of language there is both unusual clarity and economy, which in turn enables the arguments to cover an impressive amount of ground such that the fundamental arguments relevant to and expected by the question as well as many important perspectives that bring out complexities in these arguments are incorporated into the discussion.*

The difference between a 'developed' and 'civilised' society is this: a developed society possesses structure in terms of its administration of order and resources, making it growing and functional. A civilised society has all of this, and a clear moral compass to direct itself, and its members of society into making morally upright and consistent decisions. This can manifest in the socio-cultural mores or norms, or even individual beliefs and values in a civilised society. Today, many societies are socio-economically and technologically developed; but that is [distinct] from their capacity for morality. This essay will argue that the treatment of animals in society is the clear demarcation between a 'developed' and 'civil' society. Not only do various societies resolve the problem of scarcity via the systematic exploitation of sentient animals who can express pain, many individuals are selective in their moral treatment or cognisance of domesticated versus farmed animals, and compared to our treatment of the socially disenfranchised, this is a better moral metric because it allows us more autonomy in what we want to do with these animals, that decide societal morality and the extent of 'civilisation'.

The use of a comparison to bring out the significance of the keyword 'civilised' is effective in bringing out the moral aspect inherent in the notion of civilisation

There are a few reasons why society tends to exploit animals. Anthropologically, given how agrarian societies were blighted by bad weather, our ancestors shifted to animal breeding as a result to sustain their communities. Developmentally, over the course of time, to support the ever-growing need of scarcity, we upped the bar by creating animal breeding industries and farms which number in the millions. This manifests [in] exploitation, because in the utilitarian aim of providing ourselves a comfortable and affluent lifestyle, we tend to overlook the socio-emotional welfare of animals, and be brutal to them in terms of upbringing and slaughtering. This looks like undercover videos from PETA and animal rights organisations of how brutally pigs and chickens are treated: some pigs are not knocked out before their throats are slit, and male chickens thrown in a meat blender. What makes society less than civil in this clear test of morality is this: we [are] more [sentient] than animals, and thus are able to use them however we wish; for food and [as] pets. Given that we had the power to make a choice, as various societies do, to ensure that animals feel as little pain as possible (given now we are able to morally empathise with their pain as a universal experience) even when preparing them for consumption (i.e. slaughter), we chose to take the less moral and more utilitarian option to solve the problem of scarcity, by subjecting billions of sentient existences per year towards a short lifetime of torture and pain. Not only are consumers, when buying products as a choice, mainly choos[ing] meat products from slaughter houses to economically fund this cycle of profitable exploitation; our governments have increasingly given free reign for farmers and industries to continually exploit animals, where Britain rejected a recent proposal to introduce more humane measures such as animal stunning/gassing into farms. Ultimately, every stakeholder (the consumer, the government, the farmers) are all able to make the comparatively moral choice of supporting all more humane treatment of animals; yet we are more than willing to give up our morals in

This paragraph is fundamental in the argument, because it sets out the relationship between civilised behaviour and the treatment of animals, two things which do not always appear to be in conflict - in other words, it helps to justify the contention of the question, thereby securing the significance of the whole response

developmental and lifestyle choices – making our treatment [of] animals a marker of societal morality.	
<p>Some proponents of animal rights argue that society as a whole [is] treating animals better. They point to lowering rates of industrial exploitation and acts by the government to ensure a good quality of life for animals. What they fail to recognise is our societal hypocrisy of selective morality. Being ‘selective’ in morality means that society makes a distinction in the treatment of domesticated animals versus farm animals. Presumably there are a few reasons for this; one being the fact that pet owners have forged emotional bonds with their pets, and two being the fact that society as a whole has gotten used to the concept of domestication and interaction with these animals of favourable characteristics (e.g. obedience, loyalty, emotional availability). This shows in the differing standards of treatment and cognisance that society possesses: when domestic animal abuse happens in Singapore, there will be a huge Stomp/Facebook furore; but when faced with the question of systematic animal exploitation by Malaysian/Indonesian farms, many are silent. This shows that based on arbitrary animal characteristics such as ‘cuteness’ or ‘closeness to humans’, society prioritises the welfare of domesticated animals over animals in general, highlighting a moral selection of which animals to be cared for and which animals not to be. Developmentally, to fulfil the socio-emotional needs of humans, a few animals are bred to meet this demand; yet society is silent and morally complicit in animal exploitation – showing how society seeks to serve its own developmental ends rather than be morally consistent in its standards of animal treatment.</p>	
<p>Here, some argue that the clearest metric to determine a civilised society is the way in which it treats the societally disenfranchised. They argue that given the trend of many emotionally advanced societies who have more than tackled the problem of scarcity, they are able to make a moral choice on whether or not to care about the socially disenfranchised, be it in policy or dispelling hateful stereotypes. Comparing this to the metric of animal treatment, the latter is a stronger metric for a few reasons. Firstly, there is no implicit societal expectation to care about animal rights as strongly as human rights, since we are better able to relate, communicate and thus care about human rights. This means that with regards to moral decisions we can make about animals, we have much more free reign to make any choice as compared to a compelling desire to help a fellow human. Secondly, the issue of dealing with the disenfranchised has been tackled to a much larger extent – affirmative action policies, social income and food drives by various stakeholders in society such as the government, NGOs, and even individuals are involved in aiding the disenfranchised. Compare this to the often ignored issue of animal rights, which a majority of people [do not prioritise] and refuse to dismiss simply because (1) they implicitly prioritise a better lifestyle over the rights of animals and (2) animals do not possess the same bandwidth of sentience or ability to communicate pain or socio-emotional experiences, making the animal issue less visible. Ultimately, the issue of animal rights is able to present a far clearer test, of whether society is civilised or not, given individuals have no clear moral expectation or relatability to the issue, yet it still is an important moral choice that many are complicit in sidelining or [not prioritising] with regard to individual lifestyle or societal development.</p>	<p>This comparison is a natural one to make, and one that is expected by the question, since for there to be the ‘best test’, there have to be other candidates to serve as yardsticks of civilisation</p>
<p>Ultimately, in the discussion of what makes a society ‘civilised’, one cannot simply look at the extent of socio-economic or political progress, for this is merely a structurally developmental aspect of societal progress. ‘Civilisation’ means society [must be] able to make morally upright and consistent choices without coercion or relation with regards to issues of moral</p>	<p>While it is interesting to point out why we might want such a measure for civilisation of a society, it would also</p>

variance. In this case, the treatment of animals by society has been highly utilitarian and hypocritical, even when society on the individual and governmental level possessed the ability to make a more moral choice which encompassed the welfare of animals, clearly visualising how a developed society is not necessarily civil in morality.

*(Lai Chee Yuen, 18-12)*

be good to reiterate the main argument made in the essay

# Application Question: 2018 JC1 Promotional Examinations

In response to Eunoia Junior College 2018 JC1 Promotional Examination

***Richard Denniss asserts that we need to change our culture of affluenza in order to prevent human consumption patterns from doing enormous environmental harm. How far do you agree with his views, relating your arguments to your own experience and that of your society?***

## Response 1

<p><i>This is a thoroughly clear, cogent and interesting response that has balance woven skilfully into the argument. It successfully addresses the requirements of the question and provides insightful evaluation by establishing links between the argument and characteristics of Singapore society. However, there is space for demonstrating even deeper understanding by investigating the underlying reasons for many of the phenomena mentioned.</i></p>	
<p>Denniss asserts that if we want to prevent the world's demise, "the trajectory of human consumption will need to change radically in the coming decade". He is implying that if we do not change our consumerist culture, that is, buying things just for the thrill of it and buying things meant to be disposed of, the Earth will suffer irreparable damage. I agree to a large extent with his views and find that [they are] applicable to my society. As with most developed nations, Singapore does have a consumerist culture. Evident from the proliferation of convenience stores all over the island - think Cheers and Seven Eleven - we Singaporeans are extremely reliant on convenience and prize it as an important factor. It can be said that we are contributing largely to the global waste crisis, with Singaporeans on average generating 130 [kilograms] of plastic waste each year. In comparison, [countries in the] European Union generate significantly less (30 kg on average). Hence his claim is especially poignant in Singapore which has developed a highly consumerist culture. For instance, I often see empty bottles lying around the field and spectator stand after a sports meet; sports events in Singapore usually sell plastic bottles of water to spectators, who readily purchase them in the name of convenience. Hence, this highlights how consumers often think only of themselves and not the potential impact on the environment when consuming goods and would rather purchase a one-time-use water bottle than bring their own bottle from home (which can help save money too). Hence consumers have got to change the consumption habits drastically in order to improve the already declining state of the environment. Hence I agree with his views to a large extent as the consumerist culture is also highly prevalent in Singapore.</p>	<p>Relevant characteristics of Singapore are brought in</p> <p>Some consideration of why such a disparity exists can generate insight - culture is likely to be a factor</p> <p>What causes this to be Singapore's culture can be examined further</p>
<p>Dennis also posits that everyone acknowledges the need to change consumption patterns and the habit of affluenza, but the "debate is about the</p>	

<p>timing”, suggesting that people are just waiting for the right time to change their habits. I personally believe that there is no one right time to change as we do not need a prerequisite to start changing our habits for the better. Furthermore, even small changes like bringing one's own straws and bottles can help to save the environment. It takes one individual to start a change, and many others to get inspired by it, in order to gradually influence a change in consumerist culture. In Singapore, environmentally-friendly movements have been gaining traction on social media, especially the ‘Bring Your Own Bottle’ movement and the ‘StrawFree’ movement, which encourage[] behavioral change in consumers by discouraging the consumerist practices they currently partake in such as buying a bottle of water mindlessly just because one is thirsty. A study has shown that if all the environmental costs were factored into the price of a bottle of water, the price would rise from about \$0.80 to nearly \$5 per bottle. Hence, people should be urged [] to change their consumption patterns. Therefore, I believe that the debate about timing posed by Denniss should be a debate that is non-existent, as there is no right time to incite positive change, but it should be something that is done consistently to prevent our consumption patterns from causing further environmental harm.</p> <p>(Chelsea Leong, 18-13)</p>	<p>Why these have become popular in Singapore can be examined to uncover greater factors that affect consumer culture</p>
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## Response 2

<p><i>This is a well contextualised response that demonstrates a good deal of understanding of the ideas in the passage, and which is coherent in connecting the discussion of disparate claims to the main argument made by Denniss. A balanced perspective is present in the recognition of the different mindsets held by Singaporeans of different ages.</i></p>	
<p>In paragraph 5, Denniss mentions how “we have been trained to love the thrill of buying new stuff”, which refers to how we are inclined towards purchasing new products that we may not need just because we derive satisfaction from the act of doing so. This can be applicable to Singapore, as Singaporeans are famous for their ‘kiasu’ culture, whereby everyone is determined to follow the trends in order to not be left out in society. This is evident in the prevalence of extremely long queues for new products that are either limited edition or on a huge discount. For instance, every new iPhone launch sees the formation of queues that start way before the opening time, with many willing to camp overnight outside the Apple Store just to make sure they are able to acquire the new phone before it runs out of stock. The first person to step into the Apple Store during the launch of one of the new iPhones had camped outside the store for [two] days, clearly displaying how Singaporeans are willing to go to great lengths in order to satisfy their wants. This should also be considered with the fact that with a higher demand for such goods, factories would have to increase production and may end up increasing the harm to our environment through pollution. Hence, the culture</p>	<p>The link to Denniss’ argument about the ‘thrill’ of buying new stuff can be strengthened such that the selected claim is clearly addressed, although the relevance of the discussion to the main ideas is never in doubt</p>

<p>of affluenza in Singapore will inevitably lead to a rise in the problems of environmental harm, thus calling for a need to decrease the prevalence of this culture in consideration of the environment.</p>	
<p>In paragraph 10, Denniss claims that whether consumerism and materialism around the world can be curbed “will be determined by culture”. This refers to how consumers’ mindsets towards the consumption of goods would affect their inclination to either over-consume or be frugal. This is applicable to Singapore as since Singapore is an Asian Society, locals typically advocate Asian values of thrift, and are inclined towards saving money and instead focusing on consuming [necessities], with the occasional splurge if they have more disposable income. However, this may only apply to the older generation of Singaporeans who are more thrifty due to their past experiences of living modestly during the developing years of Singapore, when it was still a third world country. The younger generation generally adheres to a different type of culture, whereby they are more tempted to satisfy material wants. This is also due to the rising affluence of the younger generation in Singapore, due to their easy access to quality education being a ticket to getting a job that pays well. In addition, with the rise of social media, the younger generation may feel the pressure to follow the latest trends and hence desire to gain materialistic goods to either be on par with the majority or stand out from others. Hence, this would also result in an increased demand for goods that may cause pollution in the environment during the process of manufacturing, thus there is also an increasing need for Singaporeans to change consumption patterns in order to conserve the environment. Therefore, the significance of culture is apparent in Singapore as consumer culture must first be altered in order to increase environmental conservation.</p> <p>(Jermaine Yeo, 18-E1)</p>	<p>Clear explanation of the implications of the claim</p>

### Response 3

<p><i>This response demonstrates clarity and logic in its well-developed arguments that successfully address the question requirements. The evaluation can however be strengthened by drawing even stronger links to why Singaporeans may behave the way they do. While the second paragraph hinges on a slight misunderstanding of the author’s assertion, the argument made is nonetheless relevant and logical.</i></p>	
<p>In paragraph 10, Denniss asserts that culture is the key determinant in shaping consumer patterns either towards environmental degradation or conservation. He said that “whether consumers choose to double spending on bottled water or carry their own thermos will be determined by culture”. He feels that when most of society takes a stand for environmental conservation, each individual will be more compelled to do his or her part to reduce their waste. I agree with his argument. Singapore is very much a society which acts upon following other's actions and current trends. Thus,</p>	<p>Explanation is clear and accurate</p> <p>Why this is the case should be explained, as it is not self-evident</p>

<p>when it has become a cultural norm to do something, many citizens will follow suit and be more willing to change their behavior. Recently campaigns to reduce waste, especially single-use plastic, have taken flight in Singapore's social media scene. For example, many secondary and tertiary education schools have employed a 'straw free' initiative in their school canteens as most students are aware of the dangers of single-use plastic like straws to the environment and marine life. Many more millennials are also bringing their own reusable straws, tumblers and takeaway containers to chains like Starbucks and BreadTalk, according to a report done by Zero Waste Singapore. The online initiative 'bread without bags' aims to encourage consumers to bring their containers to buy bread instead of contributing to the exorbitant number of single-use plastic bags used daily. As it becomes more culturally accepted and even noble to do such things, Singaporeans tend to jump on the bandwagon and follow the cultural trends, thereby proving a point that culture is the key determinant in shifting consumer patterns. When employed well, it can cure a disease of affluenza and contribute to environmental conservation.</p>	<p>Why Singaporeans follow each other can be explained to lend more weight to the assertion that they do</p>
<p>In paragraph 11, Denniss states that the "cure for environmental problems is to prevent them from being caused in the first place". He means that in order to eliminate man's negative hazardous impact on the environment, one should cease all activities which contribute to environmental harm. While that may be true in an ideal situation it may not be physically possible or rational to simply do so. Hence, I disagree with him. The production of goods and services cannot simply cease as that would simply defeat the purpose of advancements in science, technology, industrialization etc. Rather, one should focus on adopting the most efficient, low waste and sustainable approach to continue production while limiting its negative impacts on the environment. For example, a locally-owned grocery store has begun to adopt a method of low waste bulk shopping for dry staple goods such as rice, beans, flour and oils. The company encourages citizens to bring their own reusable containers or jars to the outlet to purchase these staple foods at a lower price than if they were to buy them prepackaged at the conventional grocer [where they] often come wrapped in plastic. This exemplifies how one does not need to stop all operations contributing to environmental degradation just to conserve the environment. Rather, companies can look into adopting lower waste alternatives and incentives for those who choose these options in order to gradually introduce the concept of zero waste to society. Hence, this argument of his is not applicable to my society.</p>	<p>Denniss' assertion that this is the 'best' cure is taken here to mean that it is the only cure. If his argument is taken accurately, there is no real disagreement between Denniss and the argument put forth here, since opting for lower waste alternatives is also a means of preventing environmental problems. Care should thus be taken to respond to an authentic reading of the author's arguments</p> <p>Interesting argument that could have been supported with more evaluation in the Singapore context</p>
<p>All in all, Denniss' argument about changing the culture of affluenza is largely irrelevant to the context of Singapore. Singapore is a country where people tend to follow the majority or catch on the latest trend. If we are able to change our mindset to that of an environmentally conscious one, or create a trend of environmental protection, as some activists have already begun to do, it is without a doubt that the rest of the country will follow suit and contribute to conservation efforts too.</p>	<p>This conclusion adds to the coherence of the response by recalling the main threads of the arguments made while displaying personal voice through the investment in the argument</p>



(Nicole Ong, 18-13)

#### Response 4

*This is a sophisticated and articulate response that does not hurry to simply agree or disagree with the author's argument, but carefully examines the factors that are in play in the local context. Many ideas are brought in to uncover the reasons for the state of consumerism in Singapore, and ultimately to consider whether the solution proposed by Denniss is sensible in the local context. This results in a deepening of the ideas raised by Denniss to include considerations of different groups of consumers and even the role of producers in the issue of affluenza.*

In his 10th paragraph, Richard Denniss argues that our ability to change our consumption habits “will be defined by culture”, citing several instances in which our decisions on the consumption and retention of items can be influenced by the habits ingrained into us. In essence, he posits that a behavioural change and new public mindset is necessary to change the course of events and our impact on the environment. With regards to his argument, I agree that such a change is necessary as it tackles the root cause of the problem. Ultimately, the decisions of consumers rest[] on whether a public mindset exists and such a mindset is necessary for long-term change - one that extends beyond government advertisement campaigns. This is especially necessary in Singapore, where, as a result of rising affluence and exposure to technology, the amount of e-waste (referring to discarded electronic devices) generated annually has multiplied exponentially. One of the fundamental causes of this is our mindset with regards to the obsolescence of technology. It is not uncommon to see hundreds of Singaporeans, young and old, rushing to queue outside Apple stores when yet another iPhone is released - even if many of them have smartphones in perfect working condition. This trend is further accelerated by the typical Singaporean competitive mindset - otherwise termed as ‘kiasu’ - which, as a result of increasing wealth, has been translated into a competition to flaunt one’s most valued and expensive possession. Every time a new device is released, such a cycle repeats. Ultimately, this trend, which is similarly observed in other industries as well, is not caused by governmental policies, or the lack of them, but is caused by the deep-rooted culture of consumption and competition that exists in the Singaporean psyche. Certainly, this does not apply to all facets of Singaporean society, especially amongst the older generations of Singaporeans, who, having experienced the hardships of World War II and the early years of independence, reject such a trend. Many of them recall the times of hardship during the Japanese Occupation, for instance, where resources were scarce, and therefore reject consumerism today. However, this is becoming a rarity amongst the younger generations, who are privileged to not have such life experiences. Thus, the attractiveness and glamour of consumerism appeals more strongly to them. Thus, Denniss’ argument is applicable and I do agree.

This notion of the obsolescence of technology can be discussed more clearly - is it a choice or a necessity?

These underlying reasons for the prevalence of different cultural attitudes towards consumerism provide insight into the prevalence of consumerism in society

<p>However, Denniss also argues that if people continue to “pursue the symbolic appeal of novelty”, the “impact on the natural environment will be devastating”. In essence, he argues that the desire of individuals to attain a sense of social standing may result in environmental degradation. While I do agree, as I have earlier argued, that our culture must change, I believe that responsibility must also be accorded to the companies that create such an appeal in the first place. While consumers do have their part to play, we must also recognise the role that companies have played in creating the problem in the first place - and thus their role in solving it. Singapore, similar to other global cities around the world, has been flooded with numerous multinational conglomerates particularly in the fast-fashion industry. Accompanying their arrival is a general trend of consumption of fashion, and a desire to attain glamour and glory - fuelled by the advertising campaigns of these corporations. These ads have overshadowed the traditional Asian values in fashion - restraint, modesty, humility and [poverty] - by promoting the frequent consumption of branded clothing as the ideal ‘Western’ lifestyle. Such efforts have contributed to the culture of consumption, as earlier addressed. To change this culture, however, these companies need to take responsibility and reverse their perverse campaigns of the past. Thankfully, we are gradually seeing this in the form of Corporate Social Responsibility efforts in Singapore where retailers promote more sustainable consumption habits in their advertisements or even manufacture their products out of environmentally-friendly materials. However, more can be done in a wider range of industries. Ultimately, I do agree with Denniss that a change in culture is necessary to save the earth, but such a change must be accompanied, either through governmental regulation or collaboration with efforts by corporations to change the public mindset.</p> <p><i>(Kenneth Hoh, 18-05)</i></p>	<p>A question to consider would be whether such irresponsible behaviour by companies is also a result of culture, such that the notion of changing culture is not seen merely as being aimed at consumers, but also at producers</p>
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## Response 5

<p><i>This insightful response is undergirded by sound analysis and a logical but not mechanical style of writing. The second paragraph is of interest in the way the author’s claim is first addressed, and then further developed into a related area of concern noticed by the candidate.</i></p>	
<p>Denniss argues that the culture of affluenza, and our rampant consumer culture, is something that is “absolutely mad”, and “will (not) be easy to change”. This is especially true of Singapore, which I find has an extensive consumer culture. Being a developed nation with a large proportion of educated citizens, many live in comfort, to say the least. Many of these citizens are earning enough to have at least a substantial amount of money to splurge on the side. This is seen in how sales, like the Great Singapore Sale, have become a large part of Singaporean consumer culture. Citizens jump at the opportunity of a good deal, and recognizing this, stores and malls create chances for this to happen. It has also become part of the culture to</p>	<p>Author’s contention is addressed and a clear stand is provided</p> <p>Specific characteristics of Singapore that are relevant to the issue are brought out well</p> <p>Why Singaporeans jump at sales when they can afford to spend could be explored for more insight into the</p>

<p>continuously purchase new things for use. Many teenagers have the hobby of collecting shoes, especially those from famous brands like Gucci, or Nike, simply because it is the general consensus that these are 'cool'. Considering that Singapore is also the most affluent country among its immediate neighbors, citizens constantly utilize the favorable exchange rate to cross the border into Malaysia or even Indonesia to buy things at a much cheaper price. Considering that this culture of consumerism and buying of goods is so rampant in this level of society, and is even encouraged by businesses and social media personalities, it would be difficult to change. However, it must be noted that this does not apply to a small minority of the population, especially the older generation, who lived through World War II - they understand hardship, and mostly grew up in poverty, making it a habit for many of them to live a simple, frugal lifestyle, purchasing only what they need.</p>	<p>consumer culture in Singapore</p> <p>The comparison among Southeast Asian countries is insightful</p> <p>Balance is attempted, but it is somewhat sweeping</p>
<p>The author also argues that, to reduce "the impact of (our) consumption decisions on the natural environment,... we have to hang on to a stuff for a lot longer". I find this to be largely untrue of Singapore, since many citizens do "hang on" to their things, or find ways to repurpose them. Perhaps influenced by the Asian values of the importance of community, or the older generation's emphasis on frugality, Singaporeans do keep their belongings close. Many would donate their children's clothes and books to charities like the Salvation Army or pass them down to the younger children, nieces or nephews. Students often donate or sell their uniforms, textbooks, and notes to their juniors, and only throw them away when they are no longer relevant or in good condition. The ease with which Singaporeans can find other uses for their longings contributes further to this. Even when clothes or shoes are torn or broken, many find ways to repair them, or reuse them, sometimes turning turn clothes into dishrags. Other times, things that cannot be used or rarely used tend to also be hoarded by many in their storerooms, in the fear that they would need them one day. Hence, holding on to our things, or repurposing them for other uses is not a problem for Singaporeans. However, the issue lies in how we treat the things which we eventually throw away: while the government has introduced more recycling bins islandwide, it has still not become a habit for many. When Singaporeans discard their trash, it is not uncommon for them to dispose of it in one large bag, instead of sorting out what could be recycled - plastic bottles, for example. Hence, while utilizing and keeping our belongings well might not be an issue for most, what we do with it when it eventually needs to be discarded does impact the environment, and we need to make it commonplace and part of our culture to recycle and consider the impact of our rubbish on the environment.</p> <p><i>(Lew Kylin, 18-U1)</i></p>	<p>Explanation is good, but more concrete examples should be provided</p> <p>This adds another dimension of understanding to the issue, generating meaningful insight by carefully examining the different parts of the claim made by Denniss</p> <p>Why Singaporeans do not dispose of trash in an environmentally friendly way can be developed further</p>

## Response 6

<p><i>This paragraph is a departure from most responses in that it looks at Singapore with a more macro perspective, focusing not on the situation within Singapore, but basing its argument on the external characteristics of Singapore. It makes an interesting and relevant point that Singapore's small size means that our culture ultimately has little impact on global patterns of consumerism and waste. This strong awareness of Singapore's place in the world results in a convincing argument.</i></p>	
<p>In paragraph 8, Denniss mentions that "if people love their things, cared for them, maintained and repaired them and handed them on to others, the global economy would be transformed, as would the impact of human activity on the natural environment". In other words, the author means that if people change the culture of affluenza to be more appreciative of the long term use of products, the global economy will also adapt to our changing needs and reduce impact of human activity on the environment. I do acknowledge the merits of this claim, especially seeing how the economy is driven by consumers' demand, hence a large-scale change in our human consumption patterns will have a reduced impact on our environment to a large extent. It is important for every individual to change this culture [of affluenza] and learn how to reuse and recycle objects. However, I find this claim largely inapplicable to my society, because ultimately Singapore is a very small country with a small domestic Market. This means that even though there can be a change in Singapore in consumer patterns as we grow to become less wasteful, hence [leading] to a lower demand for consumer goods, a small population size of only 5 million people will not be of much significance in this 8 billion people global economy. In fact, if other larger countries do not change their culture, the global economy will still remain as an economic system that seeks to perpetuate wasteful behavior so that companies and manufacturers benefit, and consumers are able to receive new consumer goods at the expense of the environment. In Singapore, most of the shops are multinational corporations (MNCs) which have large scale production all across the world. Top fashion shops like H&amp;M or Uniqlo are not local Singaporean companies, hence even though mindsets of locals have changed, the presence of fast fashion MNCs in Singapore will still embrace [and perpetuate] the culture [of affluenza]. Also, it is unlikely that Singapore's wasteful consumer behavior will lead to a direct impact on our local environment, as Singapore is largely not part of the supply chain of most manufactured goods. Hence, changing [the] affluenza culture of Singaporeans alone is not enough to transform the global economy to effect significant changes. Hence, this claim is largely inapplicable.</p> <p>(Dason Yeo Boon Xuan, 18-A1)</p>	<p>Instead of paraphrasing the author's words, it is more useful to consider why he believes so - the beliefs that underlie his assertions</p> <p>Drawing on knowledge of the impact of consumer demand on the economy to explain how changing culture will impact consumption (and thus production) habits</p> <p>Why is it that these MNCs might remain in Singapore if there is no demand for their goods?</p>

## Response 7

<p><i>Here, there are great points identified that show how Singaporeans uniquely grapple with affluenza, but the question requirements can be better addressed with more attention paid to the notion of preventing environmental harm. The second paragraph takes an interesting stand on the perception of those who flaunt their wealth, but this is unfortunately quite biased and can be improved with the acknowledgement of other perspectives.</i></p>	
<p>I largely agree with Denniss' views, especially with the statement that "[human consumption patterns] will be determined by culture", as stated in line 85. This is largely applicable to most of Singapore as we have a culture of preferring convenience over planning ahead. This arises due to the fast pace of life that Singaporeans [experience] liv[ing] in an urban city, facing the [rush] of having to make decisions quickly. This causes us to forget to plan ahead, as reflected in how food wastage continues to be a pressing and persevering problem in the Singaporean society. As we tend to not consider how much food we would actually discard, purchasing what we want only to satisfy our immediate desire to quench hunger, we often dismiss the possibility that we would end up wasting large volumes of food. Even in high end restaurants like Din Tai Fung and Crystal Jade, there have been reports that out of every five tables, only one will finish consuming all the food they have ordered, proving that cost is not a determinant in the human consumption patterns of Singaporeans. It is a sad reality that we are largely wasteful and this is mainly attributed to our culture of wanting to obtain things quickly and conveniently. However, it is not to say that such a prospect would last. The Singaporean government often encourages recycling programs in schools to educate the youth about the importance of reducing wastage, and there is an increasingly common practice of dumpster diving, where[] citizens may go through to waste in dustbins to retrieve items that are still useable or recyclable - for instance, vegetables that have been deemed unsuitable for sale but are still edible - and ensuring that they are in clean and good condition before passing them to the poor. The increasing prevalence of these practices are not only evidence that the wasteful culture of Singaporeans can be salvaged, but also that our consumption patterns are influenced by Culture, by mindset and what is deemed desirable by society. In this case, it would be a push towards more environmentally friendly consumption patterns. Thus, I concur with this sentiment of Denniss'.</p>	<p>A more specific claim would be helpful, since a vague claim like this can lead to an unfocused argument</p>
<p>However, I disagree with Denniss' point that "the process of buying new things and displaying new symbols might provide status or other psychological benefits" as he mentions in lines 47-48. This is largely inapplicable to Singapore due to our propensity to make remarks about those who come across as [] mercenary. Singaporeans have a tendency to monitor the behavior of others, and especially figures of fame or authority, and if any of them happen to put a toe out of line, they would be heavily criticized. Such was the case for Member of Parliament Tin Pei Ling, who had posted a picture</p>	<p>This paragraph is quite clearly biased; recognising that another side exists will help balance the argument</p> <p>Is this really about materialism, or is it about materialism associated with</p>

<p>of herself and the new Kate Spade bag that her husband had purchased for her. She was immediately bashed by Singaporean netizens for her materialism and shallow personality, showing that in Singapore, buying new products and displaying them largely does not receive any positive benefits like [a better] reputation or happiness. It is actually the opposite, where Tin Pei Ling's status received negative backlash, and she [] felt remorseful. Thus, as Singaporeans do not view those who show off their acquisitions publicly as people with high reputations, viewing them as shallow parties instead and making negative remarks about them, it cannot be said that the process of buying new items and displaying them would bring status and psychological benefits for Singaporeans. They would be heavily judged for doing so. Thus, I do not agree with this view of Denniss' in relation to Singapore's culture.</p> <p>(Leanne Foo, 18-E2)</p>	<p>such an office?</p> <p>More depth, such as by considering how we are caught between Western and Asian notions of consumption would be highly insightful</p>
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## Response 8

<p><i>Both paragraphs of this response effectively highlighted that the issue of affluenza is complex in Singapore, resulting in a response that is sophisticated rather than polar and one-dimensional. This is done through the provision of balance in both paragraphs. Despite some factual inaccuracies, the response overall is logical and successful in adding value to Denniss' arguments.</i></p>	
<p>The author states that change-makers must "spend as much time thinking about the cultural drivers of the problems they seek to solve as developing policy changes". He means that considering the aspects of culture that drive these problems is just as important as implementing new policies. Unfortunately Singapore's government seems to be doing little of that. Of course, the government has recently encouraged the '#strawfreeSG' movement that seeks to change consumer habits by promoting less straw use. However, adding a disposable water bottle to the National Day packs for tens of thousands of Singaporeans every single year not only sends the message that the consumption of bottled water is acceptable, but also diminishes the worth of the government's support of the straw free movement. In order to have a positive influence on Singapore's consumption patterns to protect the environment, it is crucial for such inherently, and indirectly harmful behavior to cease. Hence this view of the author, while not currently true in Singapore, is important to be practiced in my society.</p>	<p>Consider if the work of changing culture must be initiated by the government</p> <p>This notion of the consistency of cultural messaging is interesting, and can be developed in more detail to shed some light on the complexity of the issue and why the culture of affluenza persists</p>
<p>The author also states that "the global economy would be transformed if people maintained and repaired their things and then handed them on to people who did likewise". He means that prolonging the use of an item or perpetuating [its] existence by [giving it a second lease on life] can effectively change the economy. This is somewhat applicable to Singapore. Recently, more organizations, including the Salvation Army and those related to the Catholic church in Singapore, have been reaching out to the public for used clothes, toys or items still in working condition, so as to donate these to</p>	

<p>others or needy families. Since they have been quite successful and these drives to occur quite often, it is true to conclude that Singapore does have a culture of donating and reusing used items to prevent wastage and to maximize the use of such objects. However, not all Singaporeans act in the same way. Many are inclined towards simply and immediately replacing their possessions when they show the first sign of wear and tear. For example, more Singaporeans are buying the latest iPhone X even though [it was] launched a year after the previous iPhone model, and surely the shelf life of an iPhone is longer than a year. This culture of being trendy and owning the latest products has superseded the culture of preserving our possessions until they are no longer functioning. Hence this view is only applicable to some Singaporeans.</p>	<p>How widespread is this practice that it can be positioned as the majority culture in this paragraph?</p> <p>How such cultural lines can be drawn could be developed further to ground the balance in contextual understanding - why do some Singaporeans follow the trends while others do not?</p>
<p>Overall, Dennis's views are not entirely foreign to Singapore as we do see some aspects of his views in Singapore's culture and policies, however they are also not entirely applicable due to other cultures that have perhaps been innately drilled into many Singaporeans.</p> <p>(Jaena Sim, 18-02)</p>	<p>Rather than being vague, what such cultures might be and how they clash could provide valuable insight into the local culture of affluenza</p>

## Response 9

<p><i>In this response, attempts are made to look at features of the local context that inform the behaviour and mindsets of Singaporeans when it comes to consumption. There are clear efforts made to have the entire response cohere with a clear structure and organisation, the presence of an introduction and conclusion and the use of signposting to form a complete response to the question. Overall, it raises some interesting ideas, but could benefit from a more in-depth investigation of how context results in the current state of consumerism.</i></p>	
<p>Denniss writes about the differences between consumerism and materialism, the culture of affluenza, the immense amount of waste we generate as well as how to fix such bad habits of excessive consumption. Denniss poses the truth about our culture being more relaxed on spending and this is especially true in my society. Hence, based on my own experience and elements of my society, I do agree with that we need to change our culture of affluenza in order to prevent environmental harm.</p>	<p>The link between being 'relaxed on spending' and the culture of affluenza can be clearer</p>
<p>Denniss defines consumerism one way as "the thrill of hunting for a bargain". This is especially true in my society as Singaporeans are traditionally thrifty because of our founding fathers' emphasis on saving up for a better future, Singaporeans are naturally drawn to crazy discounts and sales. It is not uncommon for many Singaporeans to hold out on their shopping sprees until July where there will be the annual Great Singapore Sale, with crazy discounts and a wide range of products available. Besides that, there are other sales by different firms such as Takashimaya and their Taka Membership Card Day, which incentivize Singaporeans to purchase more during those periods. The thrill of hunting for bargains certainly is derived from the satisfaction of</p>	<p>Whether this emphasis is still relevant today is a possible area for further development</p> <p>The link between hunting for a bargain and consumerism can be made clearer. The idea that bargain hunting causes people to buy things they do not need is crucial in substantiating the argument</p>

<p>knowing that one got it at a discount and [the item is] therefore deemed 'more worth it'. Hence, I agree with Denniss that in my society, consumerism does exist.</p>	<p>that consumerism is prevalent locally</p>
<p>Denniss also [attributes] consumerism to the fact that "people are willing to spend their own time and money to show they fit in or to make sure they stand out", which suggests the importance of fitting into the norm as a cause for consumerism. An element of Singapore Society is the 'kiasu' culture in Singapore. This translates to the fear of losing. With more people becoming more affluent and to keep up with the competitiveness of Singapore, it is not surprising that many Singaporeans are feeling the pressure to keep up with the fast pace of our society. Hence, the desire to be 'branded' increases, [leading] to the [lifestyle of] toxic consumerism [] that Dennis claims is from the culture of wanting to fit in.</p>	<p>Context is brought in, but the point should be supported with concrete illustrations</p>
<p>However, based on my experience, Denniss' claim that the cause of consumerism is because of our "embrace of 'convenience' and our acceptance of our inability to plan ahead" is not particularly true []. Many youths are being more mindful about the impact of the amount of waste we are generating as seen by how sea creatures mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and choke from consuming it [and] [a]lso, from the videos of plastic straws being stuck in turtles' noses [causing them to] suffer[] from the pain. All these have resulted in minor movements across schools in Singapore to go 'straw free'. This is done by selling reusable metal straws and promoting the act of being eco-friendly. With this trend-setting, youths are becoming more mindful of their actions and are actively participating. However, looking at it on a larger scale, it is myopic to assume that this conservation sentiment is island-wide, and even worldwide. The majority of the food stalls in Singapore still utilize styrofoam and plastic materials, as well as disposable utensils. This makes many conservation acts in Singapore negligible because of how on a larger scale, the country is still producing more waste for the sake of convenience, like what Denniss has suggested.</p>	<p>Can consider why Singapore's youths are concerned about such matters, while other groups such as food stall owners may not be, and how such awareness has been able to turn into a movement to go straw-free</p>
<p>In conclusion, although what Denniss claims is largely true and applicable to my society, it is also important to sometimes zoom in on to the various groups succumbing to consumerism and assess the extent of the harm to the environment. It is useful to credit efforts made by youths or conservationists and actively promote their efforts rather than just focusing on the negative aspects.</p> <p>(Zhang Yuqing, 18-O1)</p>	

## Response 10

*The second paragraph of this clear response is particularly interesting in its acknowledgement that our will to change our consumption habits may run counter to our need for survival - in essence, a strong*



<p><i>awareness of the context enables a convincing evaluation of the inapplicability of Denniss' arguments to Singapore. The response can be strengthened through touches such as making explicit reference to other ideas from the author, and creating a greater coherence between the two paragraphs.</i></p>	
<p>The author contends that "if people loved their things, cared for them, maintained and repaired them and then handed them on to others who did likewise, the global economy would be transformed" (lines 63 - 64). In other words, if current human consumption patterns of the convenient disposal of good deemed worthless or unsuitable for consumption changed to one based on maintenance and restoration, the individual's conscious efforts would collectively revolutionize the way our world operates, thus averting severe environmental consequences. I agree with the author to a large extent, with reference to my society, Singapore. Such efforts of reducing the extent at which items are thrown away can be seen through the [trade in second hand goods] made possible by Carousell, an online application that facilitates reselling of unwanted clothes, gadgets and textbooks amongst Singaporeans. On an individual level, it seems individuals are encouraged to find a new home for their pre-loved goods through the incentive of earning a few bucks of profit. Moreover, on a political scale, Singapore has pledged its commitment to the Paris climate change agreement and has sought to carry out its promise by introducing a carbon tax of \$5 per tonne of greenhouse gas emissions starting 2019. In recent times, the Singapore government has been initiating environmental efforts to create a more sustainable future for Singapore. It thus seems that individuals, corporations and the government are working together to mitigate the environmental impact of the mass consumerism and production of such goods in Singapore.</p>	<p>A strong understanding in which the way culture can operates on the individual and societal level is demonstrated in this explanation of the claim</p> <p>How the culture of Singapore enables such platforms to succeed is a potential area for greater depth of insight</p> <p>Though there is an attempt to move from a local to a global scale to widen the scope of the argument, this should still be done with the chosen claim in mind. Here, the coherence of the paragraph is affected by this digression from claim's focus</p>
<p>However, the author contends that "we can change - if we want to" (line 15). The author means that one's will and determination to change the consumer culture is a sufficient criteria. This argument is flawed as it is too simplistic and naive in assuming that such radical transformation would happen with our simple will for it. Thus, I disagree with the author's views to a large extent with reference to the above argument. Singapore, being a globalized economic powerhouse, owes large amounts of its success to its open trade policies and skilful adaptation to the world's cultural trends of capitalism. The purchase and [sale] of goods and services drives the economy; a decrease in consumer expenditure inevitably leads to a slowdown in the economy. Given that our current economic model relies on the continual transaction between consumers, producers, banks and the government, it might be detrimental to our economy if our spending on goods were to be decreased significantly. Moreover, aside from purchasing goods, the purchase of services like air travel has detrimental impacts on the environment due to the greenhouse gas emitted from aeroplanes. Given Singapore's position as a transit point between the East and the West our airline industry is very much key in driving Singapore's tourism receipts. Hence, it would be myopic to argue that the reduction of consumption of goods and services would be possible through [...]</p>	<p>Good use of economic knowledge to justify the need for consumption</p> <p>Making reference to the passage here (e.g. 'the purchase of services that Denniss advocates as part of the solution to affluenza in line 61...') would strengthen the focus on evaluating Denniss' arguments</p>

(Oh Anna, 18-15)	
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## Response 11

<p><i>Individually, each of the two paragraphs in this response demonstrate some elegance in their logic and development of ideas. However, there is no attempt at coherence across paragraphs, such that the overall effect is of less impact than if they had been properly connected and made coherent.</i></p>	
<p>Richard Denniss proffers in his argument how “we have been trained to love the thrill of buying new stuff”, and further elaborates on how “it is the symbolism of a new handbag or new car, its expensive logo proudly displayed that delivers transient happiness”. Indeed, in Singapore where [we] often pride[] ourselves in our unique brand of being a shopping paradise, and are clearly celebrants of the urban life, I concur with Dennis and find this statement to be largely applicable in my society. In our economically prosperous cosmopolitan, globalized City, with Singapore topping global indices in many areas such as the quality of life, it is unsurprising that that is a strong, tangible sense of an insatiable desire to own the newest, most luxurious items, since possessing such items confer a certain social standing and status in our society. This can be seen in how the queue for Apple's two thousand dollar iPhone 10 in Singapore led to many camping overnight in Orchard Road. Take a stroll down Orchard Road and one would be bombarded by the shining banners of luxurious brands with the likes of Gucci, Miu Miu and so on, whilst being jostled along with the huge throngs of shoppers, laden with shopping bags. To complete this illustration, look around and one would probably be greeted by the sight of long lines of branded, luxurious cars along Orchard Road. Thus [] Singapore [] is largely observed to be a highly brand conscious society whose favorite hobbies include shopping. This culture of shopping and constantly upgrading our possessions aptly encapsulates the pervasive sense of both consumerism and materialism here in Singapore where the desire to flaunt one's wealth perhaps to show how they have ascended the career ladder is very real in Singapore, rendering Dennis's argument highly relevant and applicable to our society. Perhaps what fuels such strong consumeristic desires in our society, is also embedded in our narrative, where progress is so ingrained in our national identity and hence the need to prove one's progress is through the constant upgrading and buying of material items.</p>	<p>Instead of two different claims, a single claim would allow for a clearer focus to the paragraph. Other ideas can be brought in later</p> <p>Illustration is highly effective at providing a snapshot of the pervasiveness of consumerist culture in Singapore</p> <p>Interesting point that connects real observations of behaviour in Singapore to larger social narratives of progress</p>
<p>In paragraph 11, Denniss states that “everyone knows that we need to change direction; the debate is about the timing”. Although there have been increasing efforts to reduce the consumption of plastic bottles in Singapore, I feel that Singaporeans remain largely nonchalant to the need to change the direction of this culture of affluenza, hence I find his observation of how the contentious issue [being] about the timing to be not as applicable to current day Singapore. In our small city, the consumption of goods is often encouraged since we rely heavily on foreign investment into our land,</p>	<p>The illustration for this point can be more concrete, real and observable, such that it aligns with the one provided in the previous paragraph</p>

<p>therefore the consumerist[] and materialistic culture could even be said to be encouraged here in Singapore since it fuels our country's economic growth. Therefore I feel that the debate here in Singapore is more centered on whether we need to change that direction or not, since our society still sorely lacks the awareness of the ills of such a consumerist[] culture, which is also not discouraged by the government due to the monetary gains from such behavior. As such, his observations are not as relevant to current Singapore.</p> <p>(Choo Yann Yi, 18-A3)</p>	<p>The aspect of timing being irrelevant can be returned to here to reinforce the inapplicability of the argument</p>
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## Response 12

<p><i>Overall, this is a relevant response that addresses the question requirements with an air of authenticity. Balance is consistently attempted, allowing for good insight into the complexity of the situation, but in many cases, the explanations can be taken further to result in a more sophisticated response.</i></p>	
<p>According to Richard Dennis, affluenza is due to our embrace of convenience and our acceptance of our inability to plan ahead as well as the economic system we have built to accommodate it. I agree with this view as it is evident in mysociety. In Singapore, we enjoy a high standard of living as well as many goods and services that make our lives comfortable. Some items such as plastic straws, plastic cups and plastic bags [are freely provided] which makes us feel all the more need to use them or else we are only disadvantaging ourselves. The widespread use of plastic bags to package all items in shops, supermarkets or at food courts has made Singaporeans feel there is no need to bring their own bags to carry items they have bought. Worse still, some people use plastic bags to carry a single small item like a soft drink which you can easily carry with your hands. As for plastic straws and cups, people feel that there is no need to bring their own water bottle or thermos flask when plastic straws and plastic cups are readily available at food courts. Thus, this blatant disregard for the impact of their actions on the environment needs to change in order to reduce our environmental harm. Although I must concede that in recent times, more Singaporeans have become aware of the impact of their actions and are now using metal straws in place of plastic straws as well as carrying their own water bottles to work. However, more needs to be done as the plastic wastage caused by plastic straws around the world is known to be only two percent of total plastic waste. There must be more drastic change in our consumer patterns especially for more widely used disposable products like plastic bags, bottled water and styrofoam or plastic packaging. Only such large changes can truly reduce our impact on the environment.</p>	<p>Why this is viewed as a disadvantage in Singapore can be examined further</p> <p>The reasons behind such a change can be explained</p>
<p>However, I disagree with the author that doesn't need to change our culture of affluenza. [Societies] as a whole, including mine, have evolved and developed themselves so that they can enjoy more comfort and convenience. Although the author argues that it is wrong to purchase things just because of the perceived status [] that it grants us, I disagree. My society is based on</p>	<p>The cost of such an assertion</p>

<p>meritocracy which is to reward ourselves based on the effort we put in. If the people in my society put in the effort, they should reap the benefits too. They should be allowed to buy what makes them happy. However I still believe that people in my society have the ability to choose what they buy. In today's world, similar products are being produced differently. Some products are being produced in more environmentally-friendly ways. For example, companies like The Body Shop sell environmentally friendly goods, [while] many food items made out of palm oil are also produced in an environmentally-friendly manner. Therefore, my society can keep consuming the same goods as much as they want as consuming environmentally friendly goods does reduce the harm caused to the environment and possibly in [the future not] harm the environment.</p> <p><i>(Shenoy Suraj Bantwal, 18-03)</i></p>	<p>should logically be considered here, since it has implications on the argument against consumerism</p> <p>Interesting balance, but the conflict has not been completely resolved - why should people buy environmentally-friendly goods, if something else that isn't environmentally friendly makes them happier?</p>
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