



General Paper Bulletin 2021 (JC 1)

Dear TMJC students, welcome to the year-end issue of TMJC's GP Bulletin for 2021! We bring you yet another selection of the essays written by your schoolmates during the recent Year-End Examination. We thank the students who have contributed their essays.

While these essays are not perfect or model essays, there is a lot of merit in them, and they are clear evidence that good quality writing is possible under exam conditions!

While reading these essays, you may find some of the content useful for application to other questions; do be judicious in using such information in a manner that is relevant to the question you are answering.

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

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Q2. Is too much attention given to environmental conservation today? (TMJC J1 Year-End Examination 2021)

With almost daily news reports of the countless warnings given by climate experts on how our planet is unable to sustain our current lifestyle, some may argue that there is too much attention given to the issue of climate change and efforts to stop or minimise it. This is especially so under current circumstances when the world is facing global crises, such as the ever-present humanitarian crises and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some may reason that our attention should be on these problems rather than environmental conservation. However, I would argue that not enough effort is made to protect the environment given the current state of the environment and the insufficient measures taken to tackle climate change.

Some may feel that too much attention is paid to environmental conservation under the current circumstances when the world is facing a multitude of crises that are considered more pressing. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic still rages on and death tolls are still rising despite the availability of vaccines, affecting many areas of life. Other matters of concern include economic worries, such as worries over the widespread impact of the collapse of Evergrande, the giant Chinese property developer. Humanitarian crises are also of concern, such as the mass deportation of Haitians from America that sparked mass outrage. Despite all these pressing concerns, environmental protection still generates conversations and reports in many news outlets and captures the attention of many, as witnessed in various campaigns and protests such as the Extinction Rebellion. In light of these events, some may argue that too much attention is given to environmental conservation.

However, many purveyors of this belief fail to comprehend that many of these global crises are intertwined with the state of our environment, and climate change is already starting to create problems for many countries. The retreating glaciers and melting ice caps caused by global warming have been found to contain new viruses trapped within, that could be released once melted, potentially sparking new epidemics. Additionally, the changing climate is starting to displace people from their homes, potentially causing a new migrant crisis. The estimated number of climate refugees stands at about 50 million, and this figure continues to rise. The rise in climate refugees could present new global economic and political issues. Given the ability of climate change to create grave problems in the future, I argue that there is currently not too much attention given to environmental conservation today as efforts to protect the environment are needed to prevent all these potential disasters from arising and worsening.

Furthermore, given the state of our environment and the lack of measures to tackle climate change, there might be not enough attention given to protecting the planet. As the Earth hits its record highest temperature almost every year and rising sea levels threaten to drown low-lying coastal regions, the impact of climate change is undeniable. Yet, this is not being countered with sufficient measures to prevent further degradation of the planet. Despite global measures such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) and the Paris Agreement, there are no real consequences for countries that do not reach their emission targets and climate experts have reported that these measures are not sufficient to address the rate at which the climate is changing. Closer to home, Singapore's efforts and plans to tackle environmental degradation have recently been criticised as 'critically insufficient' along with other nations such as the United States by research institutions. When severe environmental degradation is coupled with inadequate efforts to address it, it seems that there is not enough pressure on governments to seriously consider contributing more resources to environmental conservation. There is therefore insufficient attention given to environmental conservation given the inaction of governments around the world with regard to climate change.

Some detractors may refute this by pointing to the many efforts to be sustainable by private companies and retailers. This can be observed in various campaigns and initiatives such as KFC's decision to no longer provide plastic straws in their outlets, H&M's collection of old clothes to be recycled and supermarkets charging extra for plastic bags. With constant reminders to be sustainable on social media and retailers catering to environmentalists, it might be easy to assert that too much attention is given to environmental conservation.

However, it is important to note that private retailers are likely to be profit-motivated, caring less about sustainability but instead aiming to raise their own profits. This could lead to misguided efforts that are insufficient or even unethical practices. For instance, the movement to stop the use of plastic straws gained so much momentum as it was an easy feel-good solution to a major global issue when straws account for a minuscule percentage of pollution compared to other industries. The irony in KFC's non-provision of straws would be that poultry farming is one of the most massive contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. They stopped the provision of straws while selling fried chicken while branding themselves to be environmentally conscious. This is referred to as 'greenwashing', where companies brand themselves as sustainable while actually making a negligible impact on environmental conservation. This can come in the form of insufficient effort as seen in KFC but on the end of the spectrum, some companies even resort to unethical practices to appear sustainable. For instance, in fast fashion, which is one of the major polluters given the rising affluence and growing consumerism, H&M

attempts to position itself as an environmentally conscious company by collecting used clothing and introducing their organic cotton line of clothing. However, they have been found to pass the used clothing to I:Collect, which recycles only about 30% of the clothing and H&M itself has been reported to keep stacks of these collected clothing instead of recycling them. They are allowed to market themselves as 'sustainable' precisely because there is insufficient attention given to climate conservation. Very few countries have laws that specify what 'sustainability' entails, allowing these firms to greenwash their products and mislead consumers. What this results in is continued degradation of the environment while consumers are misled into thinking they are living a sustainable lifestyle, which worsens the climate situation. There needs to be more conversation generated about environmental conservation for consumers to be able to live a sustainable lifestyle instead of falling prey to misinformation.

Overall, I believe that there is inadequate attention given to environmental conservation given the state of our environment today and the insufficient measures to address it.

Marker's comments:

- **A mature and precise understanding of the issue demonstrated.**
- **Clearly argues with personal voice.**

Caius Or 21A101

Q2. Is too much attention given to environmental conservation today? (TMJC J1 Year-End Examination 2021)

In a world characterised by increasing environmental issues, it is not hard to see the disastrous effects that climate change and other environmental degradations can have on our environment. There are often polarising debates over whether too much attention is given to environmental conservation today. Some ardently contend that too much attention is paid to environmental conservation as we certainly witness numerous media publications of environmental issues, flooding our media platforms and newspapers. Some, on the other hand, assert that the amount of attention is sufficient and instead, desirable. While there are assumptions that environmental conservation does not need excessive attention, this is not necessarily true. In fact, the amount of coverage on environmental conservation is necessary and justifiable, as it can be a stimulus for governments to improve environmental policies. It can also raise awareness about the consequences of not paying attention to environmental conservation as well as to highlight to the public the responsibilities that need to be taken to combat environmental issues.

However, there is an element of truth in the viewpoint that some coverage on environmental conservation is sensationalised. In today's society, there is a tendency for media outlets to have excessive coverage on controversial topics, including the environment, as media outlets hope to gain clout and revenue through the excessive publishing of environmental conservation. This excessive coverage which sometimes include flooding people's social media platforms can irritate citizens, causing them to think there is indeed too much attention on the environment. For instance, the 2019 Tiktok trend 'Save the turtles' went viral on social media platforms. However, as much as it raised awareness about plastic pollution in oceans, Tiktok users mainly did not take much necessary actions but instead only resorted to buying hydroflasks and metal straws. Furthermore, as more people purchased metal straws as an alternative for plastic straws, it was later found in research and studies that the production of metal straws were extremely harmful to the environment. Hence, to a certain extent, it may appear that too much attention is paid to environmental conservation given how much the media sensationalises such a topic, sometimes even producing undesirable outcomes.

However, given the controversial nature of such a topic, it is even more justifiable and important that much attention is paid to environmental conservation. There are still a large percentage of people who are clueless about environmental conservation's significance, especially Trump's supporters who express distrust in scientists. Furthermore, our environment is currently facing dire consequences due to human neglect. Hence, to say that too much attention is placed is an exaggeration.

In assessing the issue holistically, one has to take the broader view that the seemingly extensive yet actually sufficient coverage on environmental conservation is needed as stimulus for improvement for governments. More than ever, government bodies have a lack of political action taken to address environmental issues. The common reasons as to why are due to the fact that they tend to prioritise the country's economic development over environmental issues, leading to the undermining of environmental policies or lack of action. There are various examples in society that serve to evince this argument. For instance, when Trump was in power in the United States, he withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement as

he prioritised economic interests and the loss of jobs in the coal mining industry. The negligent actions taken by Donald Trump goes to show that there are countries who share similar thoughts regarding environmental conservation, that it is of less significance to economic development. Furthermore, the Kyoto Protocol whose aim was to reduce carbon emissions received heavy criticism from disaffected citizens that the nations were 'non-binding members', and the lack of consensus and conflict of interest between developing countries and developed countries. These illustrations shed light that media coverage is much needed for governments to provide checks and balances to refine policies or take necessary action, reducing a state's complacency in dealing with environmental issues.

One has to also consider the argument that the amount of coverage on environmental conservation is a justifiable amount since it can raise awareness to citizens about the detrimental consequences of not paying attention to such an issue. There are observations in society that reflect this argument, for instance, the global controversy regarding palm oil plantations. Companies like Kit Kat and Nestle were charged for deforestation and loss of biodiversity in rainforests in Indonesia and Malaysia. This example sheds light on certain corporations and businesses, who are at the forefront of producing consumer goods, and how they resort to unethical practices of production and manufacturing of products, which can directly impact our environment. In addition, the consumption of plastic and emissions of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are primary concerns that affect our environment. Given how consumers excessively use plastic bags when grocery shopping, and the number of carbon emitting cars owned by Singaporean citizens, it becomes apparent that people do not pay enough attention to environmental conservation given their careless usage of extensive amounts of plastic and the reluctance to purchase an electric-powered car instead. Hence, coverage on environmental conservation is justifiable and much needed to alert people about the impacts of being negligent towards such an issue.

In assessing the context further, the large amount of coverage and attention on environmental conservation is needed to highlight to the public their responsibilities and the actions to be taken in combating environmental issues. For instance, the teenage Swedish activist, Greta Thunberg has often publicly denounced her home country, Sweden, for lack of environmental action and Donald Trump for his inaction. Although she is only a youth, she actively advocates for the importance of environmental conservation that is much needed in today's world. Her example suggests that even individuals can shoulder some of the responsibility of combating environmental conservation, instead of waiting for the government or others to initiate actions to be taken. In addition, Greenpeace, a well-known non-government organisation, is known to exert pressure on errant governments, like China, who fail to act on their environmental policies. The existence of such lobby groups help mend the gap and loopholes in government policies. They are important agents in alerting governments of their lack of environmental actions taken and they can potentially play a part in improving our environment. Through these examples, it could be inferred that the attention and coverage of individuals or groups who advocate for environmental conservation can sometimes inspire others to act in such ways too to make a difference in society's approach towards environmental conservation. Hence, it is indeed true that the attention paid is not excessive but necessary given the beneficial messages it can convey to the public.

The discussion above has certainly shed light on various viewpoints and arguments. Notwithstanding that there are some people who view the coverage of environmental conservation as excessive, we need to ultimately realise that such close attention paid is not to be considered excessive but necessary and justifiable. Although the great attention paid to environmental conservation might compromise the peace and comfort of some individuals, much attention is definitely needed for the greater good of society in protecting and conserving our environment, which is extremely vulnerable to threats and dangers caused by advancements in technology, like cars and production of plastic, in today's world.

Marker's comments:

- **Fairly well-written and consistently argued with some relevant examples provided.**
- **However, some of the areas discussed require more attention. Perhaps the stand could also have been 'too little attention' instead.**
- **Fluent with some felicitous phrases.**

Joey Tay 21S212

Q3. 'Consumers should choose local products over foreign ones.' Do you agree? (TMJC J1 Year-End Examination 2021)

Many nations encourage their citizens to purchase local products over their imported counterparts. Proponents argue that this should be done as it helps local businesses survive and protects certain businesses which are very old and may have significant national value. However, I am inclined to believe otherwise as this would decrease the competitiveness of an economy, goes against capitalism, and forces foreign companies to leave.

When consumers are biased towards local products, it decreases the competitiveness of their economy as it disincentivises local companies to improve the quality of their products and may result in lower customer satisfaction. Since many foreign companies tend to be large multinational corporations, local companies would not be able to compete at the international level against foreign firms, restricting economic growth. An instance of this would be the three main American airlines, which have a reputation for low quality services and poor customer satisfaction compared to their Asian and European counterparts. This is due to the dominance the three airlines have in the American market so they have no incentive to innovate, as they do not have any competitors. This results in them constantly ranked as some of the worst airlines among developed countries. Therefore, consumers should not have a bias towards local goods as it would only decrease the competitiveness of an economy and result in low quality goods.

Consumers should not pick products based on country of origin as it could have negative effects on the economy. By buying from local businesses instead of their foreign counterparts simply for the sake of doing it, consumers are forcing foreign companies out of business and subsequently leaving their country. While a single small company leaving might not necessarily have disastrous consequences, most of the time, foreign firms are massive conglomerates, which hires hundreds of employees, with some numbering in the thousands. On top of that, a single multinational company could cause a collapse of its supply chain resulting in a domino effect and affect many local businesses and if the factors are present to force one multinational company to leave, it would be more than one company leaving and would have massive drawbacks for the economy. China is a very good example of this as the Communist regime has repeatedly encouraged citizens to purchase local products over foreign ones, resulting in many companies leaving the market such as Samsung closing one of its largest facilities, leaving thousands unemployed. Hence, consumers should be neutral when picking products due to the repercussions of being biased against foreign goods affecting the economy and their livelihoods.

There should also not be bias towards local products as it goes against the basic principles of Capitalism, which encourages having a free market economy. This might substantially limit the growth of the economy and in turn, the development of a country. The benefits of having a Capitalist economy is perhaps best highlighted by the Asian Miracle, especially the Four Asian Tigers which saw massive, continuous economic growth for an unprecedented length of time from the 1960s to the 1990s. The four Tiger Economies allowed Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea to make the transition from third world to first world countries within a single generation. All four nations adopted Capitalist policies, which alongside the seven percent sustained economic growth, saw massive sums of foreign direct investment being poured into them. In comparison, Communist China under Mao Ze Dong adopted protectionist policies and closed off its economy, resulting in poverty for its people. When Deng Xiao Ping opened the nation and adopted a Capitalist approach, China also experienced massive economic growth for a long time. Thus, local products should not be chosen over foreign products.

On the other hand, it must be noted that choosing local products over foreign products is needed to ensure the survival of certain local industries, which may be vital to national security. Favouring local products is something governments may encourage in certain industries in order to protect it, as it may be vital to national interests or the economy. A prime example would be the defence industry, where government would favour local products. Due to the sensitive nature of the products made, which is vital to national interests, it is absolutely necessary to show favouritism towards them. In Great Britain, the Ministry of Defence wanted to upgrade its existing fleet of Challenger II main battle tanks and ultimately chose BAE Systems over its German counterpart. Thus, in certain industries, consumers should favour local products.

It should also be noted that certain businesses have been around for a very long time and have evolved to become a part of the national identity. It is therefore, that products made by these specific companies should be favoured due to their immense cultural and national values. Such examples of this would include: automobiles from Aston Martin, synonymous with James Bond; Rolls Royce, universally regarded as the best and most prestigious car in the world; Singapore Airlines, widely regarded as one of the best in the world, with the Singapore Girls being a national icon, and Mitsubishi, one of the last three companies in Japan which originated from the zaibatsus. Mitsubishi's products are world renown for quality, the most famous of which being the A6M 'Zero', which was the best fighter in the world until being surpassed in 1943. However,

these are specific products and companies and favouritism does not apply to the entire industry or wider economy. Thus, certain local products from specific companies should be chosen over their foreign counterparts.

In conclusion, while it must be acknowledged that certain local products should be favoured due to their importance to national security and identity, it should only apply to certain products, industries, or companies and not the wider economy as a whole. This is due to the negative consequences of being biased towards local products might have such as decreased investment, loss of jobs, decreased economic growth, and slower development.

Marker's comments:

- **What a pleasure it was reading this essay!**
- **Very relevant examples.**
- **Sterling points.**
- **Felicitous expression and language.**

Sia Kai Jie 21S207

Q6. A celebrity's life is not to be envied. Comment. (TMJC J1 Year-End Examination 2021)

Have you ever been told that you are a born performer- that your whole life is meant to be in the spotlight with furious paparazzi clicks, successful blockbuster movies, sold out concerts or Billboard charts filled with the whole album? Thankfully, that is far from the life I am living today. While many associate fame and celebrity status with glitz and glamour, many a times, what lies underneath is a sad individual. As such, I believe that a celebrity's life is not to be desired after and jealous about. Although celebrities are able to live in luxurious accommodations and lead fancy lifestyles or have their negative acts dismissed easily, they do face problems too such as a lack of security, poor mental wellbeing and great pressure that many are willing to trade for a simpler life.

Firstly, celebrities are often under great scrutiny and pressure from the society. With social media being so widely used these days, netizens flock to social media to discuss and criticise celebrities for their performance, behaviour, talent or anything that they do. This creates a lot of pressures to constantly try harder to be live up to a perfect standard in the eyes of society and to always surpass their previous performances. For example, a popular singer Dua Lipa was called out many times for her weak dancing skills during a breakdance segment of her songs. This trend of criticising celebrities is popular all over YouTube Shorts and Tiktok. It is known as 'Go give us nothing'. This has been widely used to mock other celebrities too. While this may help to motivate the celebrities to improve their skills, it also brings about more pressure to be proficient in a skill in a very short time in order to stay relevant. Another example would be Kylie Jenner, the billionaire beauty mogul, whose daily life was featured on the show 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians'. Many viewers felt that her lips are too thin and made comments that her lips need to be plumper and fuller. It got so crazy to the point that at the tender age of 16, she had already undergone cosmetic surgery such as lip fillers. Kylie Jenner is only one of the many celebrities who have chosen to go under the knife in the face of immense pressure to meet society's expectation of beauty and perfection. This proves that the pressure faced by celebrities pushes them to undergo drastic changes in order to gain acceptance from their fans and critics. They are no longer fully in control of what they want to do. Therefore, a celebrity's life should not be envied for they have to lose their freedom in the process.

Secondly, celebrities face serious mental health issues often leading to rehabilitation or even worse, death. News of celebrities entering rehabilitation centres, meeting psychiatrists or even committing suicides are frequent headlines when reading tabloid, entertainment news or magazines. Celebrities have to face these mental health issues due to their popularity. The world is very much invested in knowing their lives on and off screen. With the world being more connected through social media, it is thus easier for anyone and everyone to track celebrities be it those who are very popular or those who are just starting out. As such, it is no surprise that these celebrities are more vulnerable to mental health issues. Today, we are currently living in a world where it is extremely easy to voice hateful comments about others online. Sometimes, we do forget that our comments could be extremely hurtful to a celebrity as they are still human beings with feelings. Not only that, celebrities do face serious mental health issues due to the rigour of their work schedule. Many entertainment firms are so fixated on churning out new and exciting content to the point that they exploit celebrities or overwork them as commonly seen in the K-pop industry. For example, K-pop entertainment groups are often called out for their inhumane training schedule, limited diet and restricted behaviour. In 2017, Jong Hyun from SHINee and in 2019, Sulli from f(x) committed suicide due to depression from the purported oppression they faced from their companies. From these two devastating suicides, there were many calls for changes yet not much has been done about them. This also applies to entertainment

industries everywhere where mental wellness is not a huge priority. It is, hence, very absurd for one to be jealous over the lives of celebrities if that means mental wellness is forsaken.

Thirdly, security is often a compromised factor in the lives of celebrities. The line between privacy and public life is very blurred when it comes to them. Every single action or location they go to is often captured by the paparazzi that will be all over the Internet or celebrity magazines. No amount of disguise or security guards could protect one from the snapping of cameras. Despite celebrities wanting fame or recognition, they still do want periods to go unnoticed or to be free from the public eye. For example, Cardi B was furious when the paparazzi wanted to take pictures of her unguarded father. She was extremely angry because they were invading her privacy as well as following an unprotected individual which is a security breach. Furthermore, there are many incidents where fans have attempted to breach security in order to get closer to their idols, some with malicious intent. Just recently, in September 2021, a man with a knife broke into singing sensation Ariana Grande's Hollywood home as he wanted to kill her. Another famous incident would be in 2016 where Kim Kardashian was a victim of burglary while in Paris. Kim Kardashian was handcuffed and duct taped while the burglars ransacked her house. While these situations may also happen to us, celebrities face an increased risk as their private details such as the address of their residences are made public. This is certainly not enviable because who would like to keep their guard up all the time?

However, one cannot deny that celebrities live a luxurious lifestyle and have the fastest access to all things new. Being a celebrity does have its perks especially when it comes to spending on expensive goods, free PR goodies in the market or annual sponsorships. These are often the reasons why people are attracted to the glitz and glamour and desperately want to live the same flamboyant lifestyle. Many celebrities are often seen clad in styles that are not released yet to the public but given earlier access to. This is seen in mostly designer brands such as Addison Rae for Pandora Me or Ariana Grande for Versace. Another example would be Olivia Rodrigo for Apple using their Apple pencil with the Procreate app before the launch. These examples show how celebrities have privileges that the mass society are not able to enjoy. Yet, this is very much appropriate considering how it would no longer be luxury wear or premium if everybody could afford it. Also, this could be the benefits reaped in exchange for security, pressure and worsened wellbeing. This thus proves that celebrities are to be envied at least in this aspect.

Additionally, celebrities have countless benefits beyond material goods such as unfair advantages. A celebrity's negative acts are either dismissed lightly or they are given lighter punishment. Celebrities are often given a free pass or backed by a large group of fans who justify their wrong acts. Crime is generally disregarded for celebrities so as to not spoil their image. This is extremely unfair because it goes against the need for justice and equality in a community. This is extremely relevant for countries that are easily corruptible with poor and weak enforcement where money is often the answer to stop punishment. For example, in 2014 Justin Bieber was released on bail of \$2500 after being accused of racing and under the influence of Marijuana, alcohol and prescription drugs. However, this would not be the case if it happens in a country with strict laws like Singapore. A MediaCorp celebrity was arrested for drunk driving and not only was he charged, he was also fired from the entertainment company he works for. As such, while a celebrity status does lighten one's sentences, it ultimately depends on the country the celebrities reside in. Hence, it is only enviable to a small degree.

In conclusion, I still believe that a celebrity's life should not be envied to a large extent because what they enjoy is very much temporary such as material wealth and a rather forgiving justice system. However, they are stuck with more devastating and complicated problems such as pressure, worsening wellbeing and security problems that will stay with them for a long time. It also has potential to not only take a toll on themselves, but others too. With that, how much exactly would one trade for wealth but a which comes with a whole lot of problems?

Marker's comments:

- Relevant points substantiated with relevant examples.
- However, pertinent details of the examples are not provided.
- Thankfully, you were explicit in linking the examples to the question so that helped to show the relevance of the examples.

Alysha Nabilah 21A301

Q6. A celebrity's life is not to be envied. Comment. (TMJC J1 Year-End Examination 2021)

Living in a materialistic world with the growing usage of social media is causing many users to be envious when scrolling through the social media posts of celebrities. Watching movies, reading celebrity magazines, walking down the streets to see billboards after billboards, advertisements after advertisements - the constant exposure to celebrities by the mass media we consume today has made us greedy and instilled a false hope within many individuals of the life that celebrities have. After all, would it not be wonderful to be allowed to live a life without having to worry about getting retrenched or without having to worry about the next pandemic? Would it not be blissful to live in a world where financial stability and social status are not present in one's worry-list? To that I say 'No'. The celebrity life is just as good as an advertisement; many, if not all celebrities use social media to create a half-truth about their lives by posting only the celebrations, the partying and the awards they win. But ultimately, a celebrity's life has more to it than meets the eye, and this essay serves to discuss that.

Firstly, with fame, comes danger - both physically and mentally which is definitely not enviable. It is not unusual for fans to want to constantly keep up with the lives of celebrities, go to celebrity's concerts to show their support, or just simply follow them on their social media accounts to see what they are up to. However, this fame has been capitalised by magazine companies who hire paparazzi to stalk celebrities in order to have stories to update fans about the latest happenings of celebrities' lives. These paparazzi completely invade the privacy of the celebrities and are extremely intrusive. Because of this, it would be expected that in celebrities' day-to-day life, strangers trying to stay updated about their life would accost them. Without such privacy, celebrities are made more susceptible to danger, even with security guards tagging along. For example, a recent video surfaced on an Instagram post of the famous singer Selena Gomez, being bombarded with questions by the paparazzi about her failed love life with another singer named Justin Bieber, whilst she was having a panic attack. This video sparked rage not only by fans of Selena Gomez, but also fans of Justin Bieber; many of the comments stating that the questions raised by the paparazzi were too invasive and rude. In the video, Selena Gomez politely tells the paparazzi that they were 'making her scared', to which the paparazzi replied, 'Sorry Selena, it's really competitive', referring to the job of the paparazzi. Moreover, with fame comes danger to a celebrities' well-being. The anonymity of social media has been utilised by some individuals to make crude and rude statements on celebrities' profiles. A recent interview with Jesy Nelson, the now ex-member of British girl group Little Mix, announced her departure from the girl band due to the overwhelming negative comments that alienated her from the girl group. Overarching statements were made by users to fat-shame her, comment on her facial features, and even to the extent of death threats telling her that she was unworthy. In 2019, Lili Reinhart, an actress in the hit Netflix series 'Riverdale', also made a speech opening up about her struggles with eating disorder and body dysmorphia, which had peaked ever since she became famous. This shows that the negative sides of celebrities' lives are dangerous and that their lives are not to be envied as they are very susceptible to physical and mental dangers which comes along with fame.

Another reason why the celebrity life is not to be envied is due to the fact that not everything shown on social media is completely real. Showing only the good parts of their lives, celebrities fail to give an honest interpretation of their lives and cause a majority of young audiences to be jealous. The truth is, the celebrity world is a rigorously competitive environment. To keep up with the long hours of filming, concerts, interviews, modelling and even the drama, many celebrities unfortunately turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms that in many cases, result in fatal outcomes. For example, in a 2018 documentary about Demi Lovato's life, Lovato opened up about her struggle with drugs to keep going in the entertainment industry. She said that as she started becoming famous that she wished so long for, she could not cope with it and started abusing drugs as an outlet for her anxiety, and was in and out of rehabilitation for more than a decade. Yet this side of her fame was not evident to the public until the documentary. Another example would be Glee star Cory Monteith, who passed away a few years back due to a drug overdose. During an interview with co-star Lea Michele, she revealed that throughout the filming of the show Glee, Monteith had in fact been in recovery for his drug addiction and was doing relatively well, up until a few months post-rehabilitation when he could not cope with the fame and eventually overdosed. Again, his drug addiction was only revealed after his death. Tragedies as shown are common, and unfortunately still do not serve as a wake-up call for many celebrities who abuse drugs to stay on par with the celebrity life. Substance abuse is very dangerous and is an extremely unhealthy way of coping with the game, especially for young celebrities who enter the industry and are not yet able to deal with their rising stardom. Envy something so tragic is ridiculous and one should not envy celebrities' lives.

Critics to my stand may argue that celebrities' lives should be envied as the fame they receive makes them more noticeable in terms of the actions they take, the words they speak. It makes their voice much more heard compared to commoners, and gives them more social influence. Be that as it may, many celebrities with said social power also attract large audiences who are watching their every move and ready to pounce on any mistake. The 'cancel culture' phenomenon has recently been keeping celebrities on their toes, lest they say something wrong and spark controversy, thereby removing any endorsements or sponsorships they have. For example, famous vlogger David Dobrik was recently 'cancelled' on social

media after an accident that happened with one of the members in his friend group called the Vlog Squad. This accident involved industrial machinery that many people believed should not have happened in the first place as industrial machines are not to be handled by those who were not professionals. However, because of the extent of the injury that landed the member in the hospital, fans were quick to 'cancel' Dobrik as many felt that they did not want to support an individual who was nonchalant about his friend's safety. This removed sponsorships that Dobrik previously had and caused him to quit vlogging for more than a year, despite it being his main source of revenue. Dobrik is only one of the many examples of celebrities being 'cancelled' and having their deals with companies dropped like a hot potato. With 'cancel culture' on the rise, more celebrities are being called out for mistakes they make so that they remain a good role model to fans. However, the misuse of 'cancel culture' has led to an unfair outcome of livelihoods stolen from celebrities for ridiculous mistakes made, with some of these mistakes committed years before. Envy is a life on edge whereby the livelihood of celebrities can be taken away in a blink of an eye should not be the case, especially after one realises that celebrities are in fact just like us and do not get things handed over to them so easily.

Yet, in certain cases, one cannot discount that with the right intentions, reputation and attitude, celebrities do have a luxurious life in that aspect. Knowing their way around the algorithm can help them receive sponsorships and endorsements, and earn a living via social media. It is valid for individuals to envy this part of celebrities' lives because it is in fact enjoyable to be able to receive PR packages from companies and be an inspiration to all. Fancy events like the Met Gala and fashion shows from Chanel or Louis Vuitton all showcase the more luxurious, although materialistic, side of a celebrity's life. Compared to a regular nine-to-five job for five days a week, the job of a celebrity seems to reap more worthy fruits of labour. Moreover, the net worth of many A-list celebrities can go up to hundreds of millions of dollars, which to a commoner may be difficult, or entirely impossible and unattainable to achieve in their lifetime. Many envy the riches and wealth of the well-off lives that celebrities have and wish to have the Beverly Hill mansions or luxurious Gucci bags that they own. Understandably so, many individuals watch celebrities with envy and as a form of escapism for themselves; out of the mundane and routine lives that they have.

In conclusion, the lives of celebrities should not be envied. It may seem, upon first glance, that the lives of celebrities would be ideal and that living such a life is luxurious - not needing to worry about finances or about social status. But the catch is that upon closer inspection, people would come to realise that the life of a celebrity is just as tough as a non-celebrity. Celebrities are human too, and not enough Chanel bags or Met Galas are enough to substantiate the 'humanness' of a celebrity. Unlike the way the media attempts to portray celebrities as living a luxurious, happy life, it is paradoxically not as simple as that. Like celebrities, the majority of people's lives are full of struggles and harsh realities. In the end, no amount of riches would be able to support one in the face of life and death, especially not on a long-term basis. If the real-life situation of celebrities is similar to that of commoners like us, then why envy a life you already have?

Marker's comments:

- **4 well-developed points which are substantiated by relevant examples. Breadth and scope of discussion are evident.**
- **However, links to question can be better managed for some points and more in-depth evaluation can be done (rather than focussing on examples).**
- **On the whole, still a good attempt here!**

Natalie Cheong 21S307

Q8. Is an education in the arts valuable today? (TMJC J1 Year-End Examination 2021)

A formal education in the arts has long been enshrined as a fundamental tenet in many societies. Even young and pragmatic societies such as Singapore have begun their first foray into arts education, forming LASALLE and the School of the Arts. However, these pale in comparison to the powerhouses in artistic education from Cal Arts in the United States to the Bauhaus school in Germany. These have stood the test of time and have proven that artistic education can produce highly talented artisans specialising in various fields, from animation to typography. This has led to a cultural renaissance in these societies. Hence, this essay will agree in favour of artistic education. Despite this, we must recognise the inefficiencies and shortcomings of arts education that inevitably arise due to the fluid and non-conformist nature of the arts.

Many pragmatists argue that the arts does not contribute as much to the innovativeness of the society and the growth of the economy as much as the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) do. Many developing societies unfortunately have to conform to a strict regimen of technical education to produce what is seen as an effective

workforce able to attract investments from Technology Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in order to fast-track their economy onto the road to prosperity. An apt example would be the Four Asian Tigers: Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea. These four countries are very conservative and pragmatic societies that placed heavy emphasis on engineering and professional degrees such as Architecture or Law. This successfully developed a strong workforce, and subsequently, a strong economy. Today, countries like China, Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Rwanda have followed the economic development model of the Four Asian Tigers and similarly, are forgoing what is seen as soft subjects for hard-grounded Science that can produce tangible growth for the economy. Even developed countries such as Japan - which is experiencing a rapid aging population and thus, a lack of manpower in their once thriving industrial sector- have decided to downsize or even completely shut down many humanities departments, which includes the arts, in their universities. This is to encourage young students to fill up the industrial sector before venturing into other subjects, as they believe that this is the most effective way to jump-start their stagnating economy. As such, it can be argued especially by pragmatic economists that an arts education is merely a hindrance and a distraction to what really matters, which is the cold, hard science that governs the world.

However, this is a highly parochial view that should long have been demolished. The idea that jobs cannot be created due to an education in the arts is a highly outdated and inaccurate one. The most apt example would be Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple Inc. He personally stated that he attended calligraphy classes after dropping out and learning basics of font design which he later integrated into his Macintosh computers. This was something truly revolutionary, as computers at that time were nothing more than pixelated green text on a black screen. The great integration of art and science has become an iconic hallmark of the Apple aesthetic, propelling it to become the most valuable company in the world. Hence, one cannot discount the arts from making a tangible effect on the economy. A prominent educational institution for the arts, Cal Arts, has produced some of the most talented names in the animation industry in the United States today. Prominent Pixar executive Pete Docter, the director for many animated films; Justin Roland, creator of Rick and Morty; and Seth Macfarlane, the creator of Family Guy; all hail from the same university for the arts, Cal Arts. These artists have boosted America's cultural dominance worldwide and contributed much to America's soft power and tourism sector. With many wanting to visit Disneyland or buy merchandise of their favourite characters. These animations have also earned millions, if not billions, for their respective companies, hence, it would be inaccurate to say that education in the arts have no value.

Artistic education also trains the future generation of socially conscious thinkers. Many from the older generation around the world are rather fond of the status quo, and do not make much effort to change it. It is usually the youth who campaign for change. Education in the arts can give a more human view to problems, as opposed to the conventional wisdom of strict and cold economic policies that sacrifice compassion for economic development. In Singapore, the common slogan 'Who pays?' has always been echoed by our founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew when asked about welfare benefits, especially for the vulnerable elderly who have no one to take care of them. Technocratic officials, trained in economics and public policy, have always eschewed humane policies for a quick solution. Similarly, in China, engineers have ruled the Communist Party for decades, and have been lambasted for allowing their fellow man to work in deplorable conditions. Those educated in the arts would inevitably learn about political critique in art theory. Such works include Picasso's 'Guernica' which documents the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War; and Tang Da Wu's performance piece 'I am an Artist', where he wears a jacket stating 'Don't fund artists' while handing out cards with the title of the work on it. More recently, there is also the graphic novel, 'The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye' by Sunny Liew, a revisionist critique of the Singapore Government. These works and their political significance which are widely known in art circles and are taught to art students, bring a human touch to the critique of harsh policies enacted by pragmatic governments today. Art educators help artists learn creative and palatable methods of presenting pertinent issues to the general population to cultivate a more progressive way of thinking - to do away with the old, and in with the new. Some may say the press is keeping the authorities, whether government or corporate conglomerates, in check. An arts education, hence, plays a crucial role in this activism and is of significant value, in rallying and creating socially conscious thinkers.

An arts education also provides a looking glass for potential artists to look into the past and future of art, and learn about cultural factors that represent their society. This will help create artists that understand the historical significance of art, and their place in the field. A comprehensive education in the arts usually include an in-depth dive into the art movements, from Renaissance, to the Romantic period, the Expressionist movement, into Abstraction, Pop Art, Minimalism and the links between this chain of art movements. This can help artists learn how each time period expressed the issues of the time, and how their societies have developed into the way they have. The modern day phenomenon of K-Pop and Anime in South Korea and Japan were not sudden outbursts of miracles. They stem from a long-fomenting build-up of creative industry through various modern art institutions, like dance schools, research and development in modern dance, stage and lighting technologies for Korea, and various manga competitions and trainees programs for aspiring 'mangaka' or manga authors for Japan. It is an entire ecosystem of artistic institutions carefully built up overtime through an investment in education of

aspiring artists. Hence, an arts education is important if a society wishes to produce vibrant art that represents their cultures and traditions which serves as a bulwark against today's cultural globalisation which poses a threat to the preservation of local culture.

In conclusion, the myopic view that an arts education is no longer relevant or valuable today is far from true. In fact, it is more valuable than ever before as countries seek to project their culture onto the global marketplace of ideas and cement their place in history.

Marker's comments:

- **Some sophistication in language and a natural flair in expression.**
- **Steady control in writing, which has elements of voice. An enjoyable read.**
- **Consistent focus on the value of arts education with analysis that delved into the significance of grooming individuals schooled in the arts for the larger benefit of society. This added depth to the discussion.**
- **Explanation was detailed.**
- **Nonetheless, the link to address the context of today's world to justify the value of an arts education tended to be glossed over. Do take note of context in future.**
- **Examples could focus more on drawing out the qualities of an education in the arts and its resultant benefits (or perceived redundancies) in light of the priorities and concerns of today's world.**

Tan Kai Rui 21S212