

1. Explain how the first paragraph supports the author's assertion about people rejecting the 'stress and burnout traditionally baked into work culture'? [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answer
<p>In 2021, so many people were quitting their jobs the media began calling it the "Great Resignation".</p> <p>Then, people started "quiet quitting", proudly doing the bare minimum at work without resigning.</p> <p>Data shows that preference for part-time work is rising and, at least according to one 2022 study, the pandemic ushered a sharp decline in the number of hours adults want to work.</p>	<p>a) The author referred to the trend of the "Great Resignation" to emphasise the large numbers of people are leaving their stressful jobs [1]</p> <p>b) The author referred to trends like "quiet quitting" to highlight how it has become prevalent for people to put in the least amount effort required at work, [1]</p> <p>c) The author also cited evidence to support this assertion as he/she referred to research finding that echoes the idea that there is a drastic drop in the duration that people were willing to work. [1]</p>

2. What is the author's purpose in describing individuals settling for mediocrity as 'white noise'? (line 19) [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answer
<p>All our social institutions thrive on the spark that comes from the pursuit of excellence. Settling for mediocrity is abdicating our responsibility to be better. The world is already filled with mediocrity, and we should not settle for adding more meaningless white noise.</p>	<p>a) Just as 'white noise' is not valuable/ just in the background/ does not stand out/ can be easily ignored,</p> <p>b) being mediocre will not value-add/ make a notable difference to <u>society</u> a+b = 1m</p> <p>C1) The author uses the analogy to help the reader understand/visualise/emphasise/illustrate the insignificance of settling for mediocrity. [1]</p> <p>Or</p> <p>C2) The author is criticizing/showing disapproval/distaste/ exhorting the world to consider not taking the easy way out and reinforcing mediocrity // exhorting people to aim for excellence as a duty/obligation for the advancement of the world. [1]</p>

3. From lines 23–27 in paragraph 3, explain two ways in which the author uses language to emphasise the importance of the pursuit of excellence. [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answer
<p>Every single facet of human life thrives because of the spark that comes from the pursuit of excellence. Our schools and workplaces must imbue within us the audacity to aspire to loftier pinnacles. Only with this audacity to imagine and pursue a better future can we continue to plant the seeds of a flourishing tomorrow. The way forward has always been clear – excel, or be left in the dust.</p>	<p>(a) The author uses the phrase "every single facet of human life" to emphasize the all-encompassing importance of excellence where no part of life is untouched by the drive for excellence, underscoring its fundamental role in progress.</p> <p>(b) The author uses the imagery of the 'spark' as an analogy to an actual spark which ignites a fire, to highlight how aspiring after and chasing excellence provides much desired inspiration for communal establishments.</p> <p>(c) The author uses the word 'pinnacles' to emphasise how the pursuit of excellence can take us to the apex of human achievement.</p> <p>(d) The metaphor "plant the seeds of a flourishing tomorrow" is used to illustrate the idea that the pursuit of excellence is essential for creating a prosperous / successful future.</p> <p>(e) The author employs the phrase "excel, or be left in the dust" to highlight the consequences of not striving for excellence, implying that those who fail to do so will inevitably fall behind.</p> <p>(f) The author uses words like 'must', 'only' to emphasise how the striving to become excellent is absolutely necessary.</p> <p>1pt = 1m (up to a maximum of 2m)</p>

4. According to the author in Paragraph 3, what would happen if we choose to embrace mediocrity? [1]

From the passage	Suggested Answer
<p>They stand as the vanguards propelling civilization to new frontiers: they cure diseases, they make discoveries and they compose brilliant music and artwork that move millions of people.</p> <p>The way forward has always been clear – excel, or be left in the dust.</p>	<p>(a) There will be fewer opportunities/a lower chance for society to push/transcend boundaries/attain greater heights/achievements.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>(b) We will not be able to push/transcend boundaries/ attain greater/novel heights/achievements.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>(c) There is a higher chance that society would stagnate/maintain status quo // not flourish // we would be lag the rest/overtaken/forgotten/behind others</p>

5. In Paragraph 5, how were American and Japanese car manufacturers different in the way they manage their production process? [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answer
Many years ago, while American car manufacturers avoided mistakes on their assembly lines by slowing down and introducing slack, the Japanese manufacturers sought breakdowns by putting the line to its paces and pushing its boundaries, receiving feedback by studying the breakdowns, taking corrective action, and then pushing boundaries again.	<p>a1) American car manufacturers prevented/shunned/evaded errors// producing cars in a more cautious manner while</p> <p>a2) Japanese car manufacturers looked out for errors/ analysed/examined the reasons/causes for the errors and took measures to counteract/guard against them. [1]</p> <p>b1) American car manufacturers lowered the speed of production and including buffer/extra time in the process //</p> <p>b2) while Japanese car manufacturers found/tested/formulated ways/methods to produce as efficiently as possible // testing capabilities/stress testing [1]</p>

6. Identify two ways in which the final paragraph provides an effective ending to the author's argument? [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answer
Given the value of pursuing excellence, it is baffling why people today are retreating from it. Perhaps too many of us got used to life being easy. Everything is one click, touch, or call away. Want food? Why cook when you can get fast food? Why go there yourself when you can just order? Need to buy anything? Why physically go to the store when there is Amazon? It is time for us to rethink the value of the super convenience existing in this age which led us to become lazier and ever so willing to lapse into mediocrity – forming a generation that quits from not just work but achieving in life.	<p>a) The author uses a series of questions to illustrate/emphasise the pervasiveness of convenience in our lives today//to help readers reconsider our dependence on convenience today.</p> <p>b) The author calls for readers / engages the reader to review/re-evaluate whether enjoying convenience is something truly beneficial.</p> <p>c) The author refers back to the trend of masses choosing to quit which ties back to the start of the introduction.</p> <p>d) The author shares his perplexity to get readers to contemplate/try to fathom/reflect on the reason for individuals moving away from the pursuit of excellence.</p> <p>e)The author raises an apparent paradox that the very advancements which had in the past made life more convenient have made people more sluggish/ slack // less driven / less proactive / less dynamic today.</p> <p>Any 2 points for 2m</p>

7. Summarise what the author says about the harms of pursuing excellence and the reasons for living a life which is good enough.

Write your summary in no more than 120 words. [8]

R1 – harms of pursuing excellence

R2 – reasons for living a life which is good enough

	Req	From the Passage	Paraphrased
		<b>From Paragraph One</b>	
1	R1	However, our quest to be excellent can create huge inequalities. (line 4)	Yet, our pursuit of excellence can lead to/result in/bring about great/significant/major/severe disparities/polarities/imbances/unfairness/gaps/inequity
2	R1	This can spark resentment in those who feel that they do not measure up. (lines 4-5)	This can breed/fuel/give rise to bitterness/envy/jealousy/hatred/animosity among those who perceive themselves as falling short/being inadequate.
		<b>From Paragraph Two</b>	
3	R1	Research on "insecure overachievers" has found that a burning drive to always be outstanding often leaves even the most exceptional performers feeling like they are not good enough. (lines 6-8) OR Ultimately, the quest to be outstanding means all of us feel like we will never measure up. (lines 9-10)	Research into "insecure overachievers" reveals that the relentless pursuit of excellence often results in even outstanding individuals who excel/individuals who beat the rest having emotions of inadequacy
4	R1	This can create severe damaging physical and mental health problems. (lines 8-9)	This can result in/bring about serious/profound/impactful/extreme harm/detriment to one's well-being
5	R1	It is also not surprising that this quest leads people to demonstrate self-criticism (lines 10-11)	It's unsurprising that this pursuit results in people manifesting/showing self-condemnation/self-chastisement/ self-recrimination
6	R2	and extreme concern over making mistakes (line 11)	and being overly/significantly anxious/worried //highest degree of worry/anxiety about committing errors
		<b>From Paragraph Three</b>	
7	R2	Embracing this mindset, might actually help one produce better work (lines 13-14)	Adopting this mindset of being good enough could enhance /assist one to generate/come up with higher-quality output / results
8	R2	because we are more realistic (lines 14-15)	as we are more pragmatic/practical
9	R2	and relatable.	and others are able to are able to understand us/connect with better.
10	R1	When we are striving for excellence, we are constantly comparing ourselves with	The quest for excellence entails continuous evaluation with others to ensure superior performance. OR

	Req	From the Passage	Paraphrased
		others to make sure we are doing better. (lines 15-16)	The quest for excellence entails unhealthy competition with others // obsession/fixation to outdo others.
11	R1	We shield our work from those around us so no one else can benefit from our personal genius. (lines 17-18)	We tend to hide/conceal our output/tasks/projects from others, preventing them from gaining an advantage from our unique talents.
12	R1	We also tend to dislike people who are both successful and lovable (lines 18-19)	Moreover, there is an increased likelihood that we harbor resentment/envy/hatred/jealousy towards those who achieve success and are popular.
13	R1	People who excel in life tend to be people who have put the rest of the world to one side in order to focus on achieving perfection (lines 19-20)	People who strive for excellence are likely to disregard others in their pursuit.
14	R1	creates a sense of superiority in those who excel (line 21)	and those who do well can become prideful/full of themselves
		<b>From Paragraph Four</b>	
15	R2	But embracing the frustrations that come along with just being good enough is a vital part of living a life in which we feel safe. (lines 22-24)	Acknowledging/welcoming the angst/annoyances associated with just being good enough is crucial for cultivating a sense of security in our lives.
16	R2	This allows us to be able to become absorbed in projects that are worthy to us. (lines 24-25)	This acceptance enables us to engage deeply in meaningful tasks/activities// tasks/activities that resonate with us/ is purposeful/valuable/important/significant to us

Points	1-2	3-4	5	6-7	8-9	10	11	≥12
Mark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

8. Passage 1 states that 'only through hard work can we attain a successful life' (line 16).

Identify one specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

Claim	Paraphrased Claim	Justification
Rather, the more we embrace mediocrity, the better we become as we are open to new experiences and live a richer life. (lines 19-20)	The idea in Passage 3 states that when we welcome mediocrity, we have improved ourselves/ become finer than what we used to be as we are willing to receive novel/fresh encounters and live a more fulfilling life.	This idea in Passage 3 undermines the view that a better and more successful life is only attainable through hard work as it demonstrates that there are other avenues (i.e. mediocrity) we can take to live well.

9. Passage 2 states that embracing a good enough life 'allows us to be able to become absorbed in projects that mean something to us' (lines 24-25).

Identify one specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

Claim	Paraphrased Claim	Justification
I make clay earrings that often turn out mismatched or lumpy but I still relish the wholesome pleasure of creating something uniquely mine. (lines 10-12)	The idea in Passage 3 states that even though the writer's attempt to make clay earrings is imperfect, she enjoys the experience of making/producing something original/personal/individualized.	The idea in Passage 3 supports the statement as it shows an example of the author's point /illustration of how the author's tolerance for imperfections/mistakes allows him/her to be fully immersed/engaged in the creation of something that is meaningful to him/her.