

# précis

ten years of essay questions from the general paper

some tips and essays too

**first edition**

## Paper 1 Mark Scheme

Use of English: 20 marks

<b>A 17-20</b>	Positive merit of form and arrangement Very fluent; effective tone Very good to excellent linguistic ability No gross errors; only few slips or minor errors Wide variety of apt vocabulary, sentence structure and linking devices
<b>B 13-16</b>	Well arranged paragraphs Overall fluency Good to very good linguistic ability Few major errors; some slips and minor errors Appropriate and varied vocabulary and sentence structure
<b>C 9-12</b>	Simple clarity and correctness Competent linguistic ability: generally sound but limited in expression Few major errors: some slips and errors Some variation of vocabulary and sentence structure
<b>D 5-8</b>	Sentence and paragraph linking are haphazard; paragraphs often short Weak linguistic ability: occasional use of correct language where no risk is taken Frequent faults of sentence construction, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary and tense Vocabulary and sentence structure are flat, limited or uncertain

Content: 30 marks

<b>A 26-30</b>	Superlative, ample, fully relevant <b>material</b> of high interest value Detailed, original and apt <b>examples</b> Complex, forceful, balanced <b>argument</b>
<b>B 19-25</b>	Ample, fully relevant <b>material</b> Good range of <b>examples</b> Competent, persuasive, balanced <b>argument</b>
<b>C 13-18</b>	Ample but uninspired <b>material</b> not as original as B Sufficient, commonplace <b>examples</b> Fair, sustained <b>argument</b> that is not necessarily balanced
<b>D 7-12</b>	Limited superficial / vague <b>material</b> Mediocre and dull but sensible <b>examples</b> <b>Argument</b> unclear or not observed

## Observations

- General topics that appear to be mainstays:
  - (i) *the value of culture and the arts*;
  - (ii) *the purpose and outcomes of science and technology*;
  - (iii) *the role of the state and its actors - politicians*;
  - (iv) environmental issues *such as global warming, carbon footprint and waste*;
  - (v) world issues such as *poverty, international relations, inequality*;
  - (vi) *the importance or value of abstract concepts and phenomena (religion, dreams, design)*
- Specific topics that recur every 2-3 years:
  - (a) history, tradition and the past;
  - (b) advertising;
  - (c) magazines, films and television programmes;
  - (d) books, museums and cultural mediums;
  - (e) mathematics and statistics;
  - (f) sports and sporting events;
  - (g) modern / city life and personal health;
  - (h) business and economics.
- It is worthwhile to practise questions from past year papers; they *persistently* recur. Who would have thought that mathematics would make a reappearance in 2010? Just as remarkably, 'politicians' featured in both the 2009 and 2010 papers, as did 'technology'. Religion consecutively appeared in 2008 and 2009.
- Singapore-specific questions appear to have been introduced in 2003 and have made a constant appearance ever since with *social, cultural and economic* foci.
- Certain topics come attached with repeated question words and issues. When it comes to film, movies or popular culture, one is always urged to think of its 'value' in opposition to practical concerns (eg. economic outcomes) *or* superficial entertainment / appeal.
- The paper has become increasingly issue-specific and issue-focused. Where the November 2000 paper requires deliberation on 'the pursuit of wealth' or 'pets', the 2010 paper begs awareness or even grasp of current affairs. Taking the 'crimes against humanity' question as an example, the student *must* know about the International Crime Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and its prosecution of Radovan Karadžić in 2008 (when the paper was set). Students who kept up with their reading in 2010 would also be able to cite the sentencing of Khmer Rouge prison chief Duch (Kaing Guek Eav) for 'crimes against humanity'.

Where a substantial number of students misinterpreted the question as one about 'crime' in general, a *moderately well-read* student would have immediately understood 'crimes against humanity' to refer to war crimes (such as genocide) or other large-scale violations, rather than petty theft, outrage of modesty or even serial killing.

- Content knowledge and evidence really matter. In the absence of genius, try, try, try. Cambridge examiners have communicated to the local teaching community that sheer relevance and rigour of content would be duly rewarded. The skill that you should learn is how to apply one or more examples to prove a point; simple, blind regurgitation is however insufficient.
- Question types have remained comparatively simple, with one or two exceptions (eg. history *and* women question in 2009). Awareness of key words is imperative. A student who understands nuances (eg. why does sport 'merit' but not receive vast sums of money?) will also tackle assumptions and in the process, develop stronger, more insightful ideas.

## 2011 Predictions and Tips

- Crime, sport, religion and gender issues are unlikely to feature in the 2011 paper, given their presence in the 2009 and 2010 papers.
- We can reasonably expect *food* and related *environmental* issues to make a comeback as they seem to have become a mainstay since 2008.
- Globalisation and global connectivity are relevant insofar as it is the context of many issues (eg. global hunger, work from home, sense of tradition). With the 2008 economic crisis on the minds of the examiners, expect something on the *global economy*. *International relations* and development (eg. China and India) should also feature. With questions pertaining to *culture* in the face of globalisation in 2009 and 2010, there is a 50-50 per cent of this 'trend' persisting.
- Having featured heavily in recent papers, one might expect one to two questions on science and technology. *Science* is more likely to recur, since *technology* was a saliently popular choice in 2009 and 2010. *Medical science, treatments and cures* is 'due' a rehash; this sub-topic last appeared in 2005 and 2007.
- Politics and politicians is a surefire bet. Given that 'politicians' has appeared in both the 2009 and 2010 papers, attention may return to *political processes* (eg. democracy) and more importantly, *the role of governments* in relation to the individual or to other states.
- Media is due a re-run. With Michael Jackson's passing creating the furore that it did in 2009 and Tiger Woods' pre-marital affairs hogging the headlines in early 2010 (Kanye West and Chris Brown's behaviour earned them equal infamy in 2009), *celebrity, pop icons, music, and the role of the media* are possible topics.
- *Advertisements / advertising* too has not featured in recent years and may re-appear.
- *Culture and the arts* are also certainties. Expect a more generic question pertaining to the *value of art or certain art forms* (eg. comic books, cartoons), rather than the focus on relevance / popularity (museums, books, reading, types of writing) we have witnessed in recent years.
- The best tip I can give is however, the most obvious. Be interested in *something* (your call), know it well and read widely. In order to have a 'personal voice', you must also not rely on the same examples as one thousand other candidates. Do not depend on our notes and readings alone. This is not Social Studies. This is not Geography. There is no real syllabus. Read, read, read, read and read. Before you know it, you will become a better writer (Paper One) and reader (Paper Two).

## Examiner's Report 2008/9

- Again this year, an anticipated key theme seems to have been 'globalisation'. In many cases, the essay began with the phrase, 'In our globalised world ...'. Many candidates also referred to the ancient idea that 'the world is flat', clearly drawing on a popular text / concept which had been discussed in class. There is always the danger, of course, that some candidates will try to find the most suitable question to adapt to ready-made ideas and arguments. **It is vital to ensure that the actual question is addressed, not one which the candidate wants to modify.** Inevitably, Centres will attempt to predict likely topics, but good candidates will, as one Examiner commented, 'tailor the material in an original and compelling way, deploying relevant examples and engaging comment in order to answer the question set'.
- One Examiner new to the Paper noted, 'The essay structure could sometimes appear rather **formulaic**. Some candidates often used the same points, argued from the opposite point of view, making the answers somewhat theoretical, more "identikit" than showing personal engagement.' There is no doubt that the finest answers always convey a **sense of personal involvement** on the part of the candidate.
- The same Examiner reinforces this point, observing that 'the best answers were those which managed to interweave their arguments with examples and offered a personal perspective. There were plenty of these'. Nevertheless, as noted in the past two years, 'Candidates vary in the quality of their examples and illustration, **the more mundane scripts still relying on the standard references to the ubiquitous** (an "in word" this year) Maslow and his hierarchy of needs; Thomas Edison (whatever the context); Einstein and, more recently, Bill Gates.' Fortunately, these seem to be less evident now.
- More Examiners this year commented on the **failure in less successful scripts to provide specific examples, relying on broad, general assertions instead**. Africa is constantly used to provide a contrast with developed countries. Still, far too often, it is referred to as a 'country' and sweeping generalisations are made regarding its poor agricultural land, widespread poverty and inherent corruption. Zimbabwe was the standard example for any discussion of these features in impoverished African states.
- With regard to examples, there was a **tendency in some cases to assume that an assertion is evidence**. For example, when discussing migration many candidates wrote about the economic benefits to a country. Singapore was then cited, but **there was no specific exemplification of where or how exactly the country was deriving these supposed benefits**. Another common claim was that migration brought cultural diversity, with Singapore again being cited – but the specific nature of this diversity was, once again, not clearly defined. Africa was constantly used to provide a contrast with developed countries, but still far too often, the continent was referred to as a 'country' and sweeping generalisations were made regarding its poor agricultural land, widespread poverty and inherent corruption.
- 'Personal voice' is not an easy skill to teach as it relies on the individual being exposed to as wide a variety of linguistic styles as possible through personal reading and language use. Therefore, with such a wide range of candidates the range of vocabulary and idiom will vary a great deal. Examiners are asked to note 'felicitous expression', and this is often one indicator of a higher level script for English. **Once again, there is a tendency for less assured candidates to rely on standard words / phrases or jargon**, especially where economic topics are concerned: 'plethora', 'myriad', 'exacerbate', 'myopic', 'pragmatic society', 'double-edged sword', 'globalised world', 'paradigm shift' and 'comparative advantage' being some of the most common. One also wonders what our world is if it is not a 'realistic one', as it is so often described. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with being 'linguistically armed' for an examination. However, as stressed before, the top-class candidate displays an individual 'voice', the result of a genuine interest in the use of English and its potential to create accurate meaning and subtlety of argument.

## November 2000

1. A life of total luxury - dream or nightmare?
2. 'I am a Millionaire. That is my religion.' To what extent has the pursuit of wealth become the modern goal?
3. Is a preoccupation with the past merely an escape from the present?
4. 'Idealism brings disillusionment; realism brings results.' Discuss.
5. Is it always important to succeed?
6. 'Science never provides solutions - it only poses more questions.' Is this a fair comment?
7. To what extent should richer nations help the poorer ones?
8. 'Public money should not be wasted on the arts; they should support themselves.' Discuss.
9. How far do you agree that health is the responsibility of the state, not of the individual?
10. 'Pets need us more than we need them.' What do you think?
11. Is it true that the old must now learn from the young?
12. 'In the modern world, image is everything.' Discuss.

## November 2001

1. Is sport too closely linked to money these days?
2. Discuss the extent to which global and national interests can be balanced.
3. 'Computers and mobile phones have made us all worse at talking to one another, not better!' What do you think?
4. In what ways does a country both benefit and suffer from where it is situated?
5. 'The most worthwhile jobs are those with the least financial gain.' Do you agree?
6. Examine the implications of cloning for the human race.
7. 'History can never be anything more than an intelligent guess at what the past was like. The reality is inevitably lost forever.' Do you agree?
8. Should advertising be restricted in any way?
9. 'A film has one purpose - to entertain.' Using examples, consider this view.
10. Discuss the appeal, and the dangers, of attempting to predict the future.
11. Is the idea of having one partner for life still a realistic one?
12. Do you think that life today offers us too many choices?

## November 2002

1. Is there a case for keeping animals in zoos?
2. 'Conformity should be the main aim of all schools.' How far is this true?
3. Can the trade in weapons ever be justified?
4. 'If people become ill it is largely their own fault.' How far do you agree?
5. Does a study of history make you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the human race?
6. 'Science and religion will always conflict.' Discuss.
7. Should the police have unlimited powers when dealing with crimes?
8. 'The prospect of a Third World War is now unthinkable.' Do you agree?
9. Do you agree that city life is becoming increasingly unattractive?
10. 'Air travel creates more problems than benefits.' Is this a fair comment?
11. Is friendly rivalry ever possible?
12. 'A work of art can never be valued just in financial terms.' Discuss.



## November 2003

1. To what extent are small businesses preferable to large ones?
2. 'A good leader must always look beyond the needs of his or her country.' Do you agree?
3. Does the book still have a future?
4. Is History anything more than the study of warfare?
5. Should medical science always seek to prolong life?
6. 'The only worthwhile form of discipline is self-discipline.' Discuss.
7. How far can the needs of minorities be met in modern Singapore?
8. Can the media ever be relied upon to convey the truth?
9. Was life for young people in Singapore better in the past than it is today?
10. 'Statistics measure everything but prove nothing.' Discuss.
11. Does the modern world place too much reliance on technology?
12. 'The family has suffered at the expense of career in Singaporean society.' Is this a fair comment?

## November 2004

1. To what extent are the young in Singapore favoured at the expense of the elderly?
2. Are the poor an inevitable feature of any society?
3. Do the past and present offer any guidance for the future?
4. 'How inventions and discoveries are used is not the concern of the scientist.' Do you agree?
5. 'People, not the government, should decide how to organise their lives.' Is this a fair comment?
6. How far is recycling the answer to the problem of waste?
7. Can small countries have a significant voice in world affairs?
8. Advertising encourages a desire for products which people do not actually need. Discuss.
9. Have multi-national businesses had a positive or negative impact on your society?
10. Discuss the appeal and value of fantasy stories and films.
11. Discuss the importance of religion in society today.
12. 'Far too much attention is given to beauty products and treatments.' Do you agree?

## November 2005

1. Is effective farming possible without science?
2. 'There is no such thing as luck. People determine their own lives.' Do you agree?
3. To what extent should the State involve itself in the world of business?
4. Do the arts, such as music and literature, really play a significant part in Singaporean society?
5. 'Medical science has been so successful that people now expect too much of it.' Discuss.
6. 'Hosting major sporting events creates more problems than benefits.' Do you agree?
7. Examine the claim that the world is too dependent on oil.
8. 'The tourist does not see the country the inhabitants know.' How far is this true of Singapore?
9. 'Instead of speeding up the pace of life, we should be slowing it down.' What do you think?
10. Consider the view that the study of mathematics is intellectually satisfying, but of little practical use.
11. 'Too much attention is given to criminals; not enough to their victims.' Is this true?
12. How far do magazines or television programmes aimed at young people in Singapore have a positive effect?

## November 2006

1. Is there still a place for charity in today's world?
2. 'A picture is always more powerful than mere words.' What is your view?
3. Does modern technology always improve the quality of people's lives?
4. 'National boundaries make little geographical or economic sense nowadays.' Discuss.
5. Should crimes that were committed many years ago simply be forgotten?
6. How far is your country prepared for future crises?
7. 'The world would be a better place if everyone spoke the same language.' Discuss.
8. To what extent do young people in your society take an interest in politics?
9. 'Entrepreneurship is just another name for personal greed.' How far do you agree with this statement?
10. Do myths and legends still have a role to play in Singapore?
11. 'Women will never enjoy the same rights as men.' Do you agree?
12. To what extent do the newspapers and magazines that you read deal with what is trivial, rather than what is important?

## November 2007

1. 'The view of the majority is always right.' Do you agree?
2. Can a belief in the supernatural be sustained in the modern world?
3. 'The arts cannot change the world, but they can make it more beautiful.' Discuss this view with reference to one of the following: painting, sculpture or music.
4. How far should a state have a right to monitor the actions of people within its borders?
5. 'Mass production inevitably means a loss of craftsmanship and quality.' Is this true in your society?
6. How important is a sense of history in shaping the future of Singapore's society?
7. Should poorer countries develop their tourist industry when the basic needs of their own people are not being met?
8. 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' Can written language really be so powerful?
9. 'Advertisements are often entertaining, but they rarely affect consumer choice.' Is this your experience?
10. Is it possible to protect the environment when many countries require increasing amounts of energy to progress?
11. Should research into expensive medical treatments be allowed when only a few can afford them?
12. 'The word failure should never be used in education.' Discuss.

## November 2008

1. Does the presence of a foreign power ever help a country with problems?
2. How important are dreams?
3. 'The more science advances, the more religion will decline.' To what extent do you agree?
4. How far do physical features, such as size and location, determine a country's progress?
5. 'Nowadays, the pleasures of reading can never compete with the pleasures of visual entertainment.' To what extent do you agree?
6. To what extent does the migration of people have a positive effect?
7. 'Air travel should be discouraged, not promoted.' To what extent do you agree?
8. Many developed countries are paying increasing attention to the ends of the disadvantaged. How far is this true in Singapore?
9. Discuss the view that too much faith is placed in statistics.
10. 'Contemporary music has no artistic value.' Is this a fair comment?
11. How far is it possible to ensure that all producers of food and goods are fairly rewarded?
12. To what extent is design important in your society?

**November 2009**

*Do not attempt any of these questions before the mock paper.*

1. Is the elimination of global poverty a realistic aim?
2. 'Only educated people should have the right to vote in elections.' What is your view?
3. Are certain types of writing superior to others?
4. Should a love of one's country still be encouraged?
5. To what extent has technology had an impact on both privacy and security in your country?
6. 'History records male acts, written by males, and holds little interest for females as a result.' Is this a fair comment?
7. How far should religion influence political decisions?
8. Should every country have the right to carry out unlimited scientific research?
9. Assess the impact of foreign films or foreign TV programmes on the culture of your society.
10. Can the transport of food over vast distances be justified?
11. 'Fashion is as much a good thing as a bad thing.' To what extent do you agree?
12. As long as people in the public eye do their job well, does it matter what they do in private?

**November 2010**

*Do not attempt any of these questions before the mock paper.*

1. Consider the view that most work these days could, and should, be done from home.
2. How far can an individual be held responsible for crimes against humanity?
3. Would it matter if all the performing arts venues in your society, such as concert halls and theatres, were closed down?
4. 'The person who dies rich dies disgraced.' Discuss.
5. 'The book has no place in modern society.' Discuss.
6. To what extent has technology had a negative impact on the skill levels of people?
7. Does sport merit the vast sums of money that are spent on it?
8. How effective are international efforts to ease the problem of global hunger?
9. 'No politician's reputation can survive the judgement of time.' How true is this?
10. How important is it for people in your society to retain a sense of tradition?
11. 'The key to good health is lifestyle rather than medicine.' How far do you agree?
12. Can mathematics be seen as anything more than a useful tool in everyday life?



## Abstract Issues

1. Should human beings look forward to the next century more with optimism than pessimism? (1997)
2. Do arguments ever settle anything? (1999)
3. 'Being in fashion makes a person popular; being different makes a person special.' Discuss. (1999)
4. 'In the modern world, image is everything.' Discuss. (2000)
5. 'Idealism brings disillusionment; realism brings results.' Discuss. (2000)
6. Discuss the appeal, and dangers, of attempting to predict the future. (2001)
7. 'History can never be anything more than an intelligent guess at what the past was like. The reality is inevitably lost forever.' Do you agree? (2001)
8. Does a study of history make you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the human race? (2001)
9. Statistics measure everything but prove nothing.' Discuss. (2003)
10. Do the past and present offer any guidance for the future? (2004)
11. 'There is no such thing as luck. People determine their own lives.' Do you agree? (2005)
12. Consider the view that the study of mathematics is intellectually satisfying, but of little practical use. (2005)
13. Do myths and legends still have a role to play in Singapore? (2006)
14. Can a belief in the supernatural be sustained in our modern world? (2007)
15. How important is a sense of history in shaping the future of Singapore's society? (2007)
16. How important are dreams? (2008)
17. To what extent is design important in your society? (2008)
18. Discuss the view that too much faith is placed in statistics. (2008)
19. 'Fashion is as much a good thing as a bad thing.' To what extent do you agree? (2009)
20. 'History records male acts, written by males, and holds little interest for females as a result.' Is this a fair comment? (2009)
21. Can mathematics be seen as anything more than a useful tool in everyday life? (2010)
22. How important is it for people in your society to retain a sense of tradition? (2010)

## Arts, Culture and the Media

1. Films which have the greatest appeal are usually those which have the least value.' Discuss with reference to specific examples. (1997)
2. 'Enjoyable, but ultimately of little practical use.' Consider the value of music or art or literature in the light of this comment. (1998)
3. 'Public money should not be wasted on the arts; they should support themselves.' Discuss. (2000)
4. 'A film has one purpose - to entertain.' Using examples, consider this view. (2001)
5. 'A work of art can never be valued just in financial terms.' Discuss. (2002)
6. Does the book still have a future? (2003)
7. Discuss the appeal and value of fantasy stories and films. (2004)
8. Do the arts, such as music and literature, really play a significant part in Singaporean society? (2005)
9. 'A picture is always more powerful than mere words.' What is your view? (2006)
10. 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' Can written language really be so powerful? (2007)
11. 'The arts cannot change the world, but they can make it more beautiful.' Discuss this view with reference to one of the following: painting, sculpture or music. (2007)
12. 'Contemporary music has no artistic value.' Is this a fair comment? (2008)
13. Nowadays, the pleasures of reading can never compete with the pleasures of visual entertainment. (2008)
14. Are certain types of writing superior to others? (2009)
15. Would it matter if all the performing arts venues in your society, such as concert halls and theatres, were closed down? (2010)
16. 'The book has no place in modern society.' Discuss. (2010)
17. Should advertising be restricted in any way? (2001)
18. Can the media ever be relied upon to convey the truth? (2003)
19. Advertising encourages a desire for products which people do not actually need. Discuss. (2004)
20. How far do magazines or television programmes aimed at young people in Singapore have a positive effect? (2005)
21. To what extent do the newspapers and magazines that you read deal with what is trivial, rather than what is important? (2006)
22. 'Advertisements are often entertaining, but they rarely affect consumer choice.' Is this your experience? (2007)
23. Assess the impact of foreign films or foreign TV programmes on the culture of your society. (2009)

## Science and Technology

1. Science never provides solutions - it only poses more questions.' Is this a fair comment? (2000)
2. 'Computers and mobile phones have made us all worse at talking to one another, not better!' What do you think? (2001)
3. 'Science and religion will always conflict.' Discuss. (2002)
4. Should medical science always seek to prolong life? (2003)
5. Does the modern world place too much reliance on technology? (2003)
6. 'How inventions and discoveries are used is not the concern of the scientist.' Do you agree? (2004)
7. Is effective farming possible without science? (2005)
8. 'Medical science has been so successful that people now expect too much of it.' Discuss. (2005)
9. Does modern technology always improve the quality of people's lives? (2006)
10. Should research into expensive medical treatments be allowed when only a few can afford them? (2007)
11. 'The more science advances, the more religion will decline.' To what extent do you agree? (2008)
12. Should every country have the right to carry out unlimited scientific research? (2009)
13. To what extent has technology had an impact on both privacy and security in your country? (2009)
14. To what extent has technology had a negative impact on the skill levels of people? (2010)
15. Examine the implications of cloning for the human race. (2001)

## **Globalisation, International Relations and the Environment**

1. Discuss the extent to which global and national interests can be balanced. (2001)
2. In what ways does a country both benefit and suffer from where it is situated? (2001)
3. 'The prospect of a Third World War is now unthinkable.' Do you agree? (2002)
4. Can small countries have a significant voice in world affairs? (2004)
5. 'The tourist does not see the country the inhabitants know.' How far is this true of Singapore? (2005)
6. 'National boundaries make little geographical or economic sense nowadays.' Discuss. (2006)
7. 'The world would be a better place if everyone spoke the same language.' Discuss. (2006)
8. Should poorer countries develop their tourist industry when the basic needs of their own people are not being met? (2007)
9. Does the presence of a foreign power ever help a country with problems? (2008)
10. How far do physical features, such as size and location, determine a country's progress? (2008)
11. To what extent does the migration of people have a positive effect? (2008)
12. Should a love of one's country still be encouraged? (2009)
13. Assess the impact of foreign films or foreign TV programmes on the culture of your society. (2009)
14. Examine the claim that the world is too dependent on oil. (2000)
15. Is it possible to protect the environment when many countries require increasing amounts of energy to progress? (2007)
16. 'Air travel creates more problems than benefits.' Is this a fair comment? (2002)
17. 'Air travel should be discouraged, not promoted.' To what extent do you agree? (2008)
18. Can the transport of food over vast distances be justified? (2009)
19. How far is it possible to ensure that all producers of food and goods are fairly rewarded? (2010)
20. Is the elimination of global poverty a realistic aim? (2009)
21. How effective are international efforts to ease the problem of global hunger? (2010)

## **Social, Socio-Political and Political Issues**

1. Is it true that the old must learn from the young? (2000)
2. 'The family has suffered at the expense of career in Singaporean society.' Is this a fair comment? (2003)
3. To what extent are the young in Singapore favoured at the expense of the elderly? (2004)
4. Are the poor an inevitable feature of any society? (2004)
5. How far can the needs of minorities be met in modern Singapore? (2004)
6. 'Women will never enjoy the same rights as men.' Do you agree? (2006)
7. Many developed countries are paying increasing attention to the needs of the disadvantaged. How far is this true in Singapore? (2008)
8. Is there still a place for charity in today's world? (2006)
9. 'The person who dies rich dies disgraced.' Discuss. (2010)
10. Is personal morality the concern of the State? (1996)
11. How far should religion influence political decisions? (2010)
12. 'Only educated people should have the right to vote in elections.' What is your view? (2009)
13. 'A good leader must always look beyond the needs of his or her country.' Do you agree? (2003)
14. 'People, not the government, should decide how to organise their lives.' Is this a fair comment? (2004)
15. To what extent do young people in your society take an interest in politics? (2006)
16. How far should a state have a right to monitor the actions of people within its borders? (2007)
17. 'The view of the majority is always right.' Do you agree? (2007)
18. As long as people in the public eye do their job well, does it matter what they do in private?
19. 'No politician's reputation can survive the judgement of time.' How true is this? (2010)
20. 'If people become ill it is largely their own fault.' How far do you agree? (2002)
21. How far do you agree that health is the responsibility of the state, not of the individual? (2000)
22. 'The key to good health is lifestyle rather than medicine.' How far do you agree? (2010)
23. 'The word failure should never be used in education.' Discuss. (2007)
24. 'Conformity should be the main aim of all schools.' How far is this true? (2002)

## **Modern Life, Work and Business**

1. 'The secret of a happy life is moderation in all things.' Discuss. (1999)
2. A life of luxury – dream or nightmare? (2000)
3. 'The most worthwhile jobs are those with the least financial gain.' Do you agree? (2001)
4. Do you agree that city life is becoming increasingly unattractive? (2002)
5. 'Instead of speeding up the pace of life, we should be slowing it down.' What do you think? (2005)
6. Consider whether noise is a problem in modern society. (1998)
7. To what extent are small businesses preferable to large ones? (2003)
8. Have multi-national businesses had a positive or negative impact on your society? (2004)
9. To what extent should the State involve itself in the world of business? (2005)
10. Consider the view that most work these days could, and should, be done from home. (2010)

## **Crime and Punishment**

1. Should the police have unlimited powers when dealing with crime? (2002)
2. 'The only worthwhile form of discipline is self-discipline.' Discuss. (2003)
3. 'Too much attention is given to criminals; not enough to their victims.' Is this true? (2005)
4. How far can an individual be held responsible for crimes against humanity? (2010)

## **Sport**

1. Is sport too closely linked to money these days? (2001)
2. 'Hosting major sporting events creates more problems than benefits.' Do you agree? (2005)
3. Does sport merit the vast sums of money that are spent on it? (2010)

## **CJC Prelims 2010**

1. "Small country, small minds." Is this a fair assessment of Singaporeans?
2. "Only the best and brightest should have the right to have children." What are your views?
3. "The mass media is nothing but a profit-making machine." Evaluate this claim.
4. How far is society responsible for the crimes of its people?
5. "Every generation of youth is characterised by the need to rebel." How far does this statement reflect your generation?
6. "Men are as much the victims of traditional gender roles as women." Comment.
7. "Those who allow themselves to be governed like sheep will eventually be ruled by wolves." In the light of this statement, what is the value of political dissent?
8. "Success breeds success." What are your views?
9. "The world will be a better place without religion." Discuss.
10. "Art should not offend." To what extent do you agree with this statement?
11. "Technology has created a culture of convenience." Is this more a blessing than a curse?
12. How far have examinations undermined the essential aims of education today?

## **SAJC Prelims 2010**

1. To what extent can businesses strike a balance between corporate and social goals?
2. How far can we depend on science to solve environmental problems?
3. 'A country should not allow international opinions to affect how it deals with domestic issues.' Is this a fair comment?
4. 'No modern city is truly unique.' Do you agree?
5. Do you agree that there is too much control over the arts scene in Singapore?
6. Is it true that the social media has created more problems than benefits?
7. Should we still promote bilingualism in Singapore?
8. 'Advertisements hinder us from making good decisions.' Discuss.
9. 'Spare the rod, spoil the child.' Should physical punishment be used on children?
10. To what extent is your society an inclusive one?
11. Examine the claim that sport has lost its meaning in today's world.
12. 'Achieving equality should be the aim of all governments.' Do you agree?

## **RI Prelims 2010**

1. How far is modern consumerism a threat to the environment?
2. 'Inequality is a fact of life.' To what extent should we accept this?
3. Is there still a place for public libraries in your society?
4. Consider the significance of silence.
5. 'The media works best when it gives the masses exactly what they want.' Discuss.
6. Is world government a good idea?
7. 'Scientific decisions should be left to scientists.' To what extent do you agree?
8. 'The best way to make children good is to make them happy' (Oscar Wilde). What is your view?
9. 'Not my problem!' Is this a good attitude to have?
10. Is creativity all about breaking rules?
11. 'Our obsession with speed is getting us nowhere fast.' Do you agree?
12. To what extent should government influence education? Discuss with reference to your country.

## **HCI Prelims 2010**

1. Does foreign aid usually do more harm than good?
2. 'There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.' (Nelson Mandela) Comment with reference to your society.
3. Does the prospect of a genetically engineered future fill you with hope or despair?
4. 'Desperate situations today demand desperate measures.' Discuss.
5. Do you agree with the criticism that most people have been so brainwashed by advertising that they are unable to appreciate true beauty?
6. 'Most international organisations are all bark and no bite.' Do you agree?
7. 'Live our dreams, fly our flag.' What would your 'dream Singapore' be like? What significant changes would be needed to make your dream come true?
8. 'The use of any performance enhancing technology or substance in sporting competitions is cheating.' Discuss.
9. Do you agree that the most important human right is the freedom of speech?
10. 'The notion that nuclear power is the answer to our energy problems is not only gravely mistaken but also extremely dangerous.' What are your views?
11. 'Population problems eventually solve themselves – government meddling only makes things worse.' Discuss.
12. What distinguishes a truly great work of art from a merely average one?



## **MJC Prelims 2010**

1. Is it important to love what you do?
2. "Business and ethics can never coexist." Do you agree?
3. Can war ever be a good thing?
4. To what extent is the media playing a destructive role in society today?
5. Consider the view that too much faith is placed in paper qualifications.
6. Is clean energy for all a realistic aim?
7. If we speak well, does it matter how well we write?
8. Does technology divide or unite the world?
9. How tolerant is your society of diversity?
10. "Knowledge of the past hampers more than it helps." Do you agree?
11. Considering the rapid rate of change in the world, should we still hold on to traditions?
12. Can high medical costs ever be justified?

## **JJC Prelims 2010**

1. How important is the role of advertising in today's economy?
2. 'History holds little value for the suppressed.' Is this a fair comment?
3. What is man without religion?
4. To what extent has water become the new basis of conflict in the modern world?
5. 'Prosperity makes friends, adversity tries them.' Discuss.
6. Is education truly rewarding?
7. Should there still be limits on artistic expression?
8. Is it possible to achieve a balance between liberty and security?
9. Assess the impact of the mass media on the culture of your society.
10. 'Celebrities and politics do not mix.' What is your view?
11. Is it true that modern life breeds aggressiveness?
12. 'Eco-tourism is merely a means of making easy profit.' Do you agree?

### **VJC Prelims 2009**

1. Is censorship self-defeating?
2. Formal education is becoming increasingly irrelevant. Is this a valid statement?
3. Mixing business and sport is lethal. To what extent do you agree?
4. "Second place is first loser." Is winning really everything?
5. "My body is my property and I have every right over it." Is this view acceptable?
6. "Good from far but far from good." Have we been misled by the promise of Science?
7. "Age and experience do not a good politician make." Comment.
8. Do you agree that conscience has no value today?
9. Is Singapore ready for the challenges in the 21st Century?
10. Museums are a waste of time and money. Discuss.
11. Is a culture of excess the main reason for the many problems faced by mankind today?
12. "Celebrate, not denigrate individualism." What do you think?

### **TJC Prelims 2009**

1. Do you agree that modern life is plagued by fear and insecurity?
2. Consider the view that gender equality is an unrealistic goal.
3. What should the priorities of poorer nations be?
4. 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' (Albert Einstein) Do you agree?
5. How tolerant is your society of non-conformity?
6. 'Man is arbitrary in choosing the causes he fights for.' How far is this true?
7. 'Science has made modern life better but not necessarily easier.' Do you agree?
8. How important is the knowledge of economics in today's world?
9. 'Man's concern for the environment is purely selfish.' Discuss.
10. 'A celebrity's life is nothing to be envied.' Do you agree?
11. How successful has your society been in embracing the old?
12. Does the modern world offer us too many choices?

## **RI Prelims 2009**

1. Is there ever any justification for divorce?
2. Is your country doing enough to address the needs of minority groups?
3. Does the presence of a strong opposition in government help or hinder a country's progress?
4. "Style without substance." How far is this true of television programmes today?
5. "Sports stars are paid too much money for their talent." Do you agree?
6. "City life is becoming increasingly unattractive today." What is your opinion?
7. "Education heightens inequality." Discuss.
8. "The world today needs more than one superpower." Do you agree?
9. How far does tourism help ethnic cultures to thrive?
10. "Science never solves a problem without creating ten more." (George Bernard Shaw) Comment.
11. "Women play a more important role than men in families today." Do you agree?
12. "The unexamined life is not worth living." (Socrates) Do you agree?

## **HCI Prelims 2009**

1. 'Fine in principle but a failure in practice.' How far do you agree with this assessment of democracy?
2. 'Nothing is worth dying for.' Do you agree?
3. 'The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.' (Isaac Asimov) Discuss.
4. 'Instead of developing its identity, Singapore is gradually losing it.' How far do you agree?
5. Is it true that our environmental problems are so incredibly huge and complex that it is impossible for an ordinary individual to make a difference?
6. Is it ever acceptable to break the law?
7. 'All ideologies are dangerous and delusive.' Discuss.
8. 'Technology is the great leveller of the 21st century.' How far do you agree?
9. 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.' (John F. Kennedy) To what extent do people in your country heed this advice?
10. Do you agree that aid should never be given to countries with poor human rights records?
11. Should it be a cause for concern that the Internet is putting conventional newspapers out of business?
12. 'Modern Art: A product of the untalented, sold by the unprincipled to the utterly bewildered.' (Camus) Comment.

## **CJC Prelims 2009**

1. Can your generation appreciate the fine arts?
2. Would you agree that foreign aid to poor countries is a necessary evil?
3. Progress is more important than tradition. Do you agree?
4. "The essence of happiness lies in the pursuit rather than in its fulfillment." Discuss
5. "What is my life if I am no longer useful to others?" (Goethe) Do you agree that this is the primary value of a human being?
6. "Are we a nation yet? I would not say we are." (MM Lee, 2009) Do you agree that Singapore is truly a nation?
7. "More conversation is not going to lead to more conservation." Is this an accurate depiction of the fight against environmental damage?
8. Discuss the view that too much faith is placed in science.
9. "A weapon of the masses." To what extent do the media empower the people?
10. "Politics is not about money. It is about trying to do right." What do you think?
11. Discuss the value of dissent in your society.
12. "A marriage is a divorce in waiting." Do you agree with this view of marriage today?

## **CJC Prelims 2008**

1. "A good leader must be a good follower." Is this necessarily true?
2. "Affluence is as much a curse as a blessing." Discuss.
3. "Housing and jobs over freedom and liberty." Is this good advice for good governance?
4. Does education necessarily liberate one?
5. "The main benefits of science have been material comforts and longer life." Do you agree?
6. "The only way to deal with a criminal is to remove him from society." Discuss.
7. Is censorship becoming increasingly necessary in today's world?
8. "The mark of a civilised society is how they treat their elderly." How far do you agree?
9. Do you agree that the problems of poverty can only get worse in the current climate?
10. Should sports stars be paid obscene amounts of money?
11. Is there a real need to cultivate a love for the arts in your society?
12. "Heal the world." (Michael Jackson) Can this be done?