



NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2019

GENERAL PAPER

8807/1

PAPER 1

30 August 2019

TIME 1 hour 30 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Write your name, class and GP Tutor's name on your answer scripts.

Answer **ONE** question from Paper 1.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

In Paper 1, all questions carry equal marks.

[Note that 20 marks out of 50 will be awarded for the use of language.]

This question paper consists of **2** printed pages.

Answer **one** question from this paper.

Answers should be between 500 and 800 words in length.

1. Consider the claim that young people in Singapore today are better educated, but no wiser.
2. Do international organisations have real influence over global affairs today?
3. Results are more important than processes in scientific research. To what extent do you agree?
4. 'Fantasy novels offer little apart from enjoyment.' Discuss.
5. Not enough is done for the vulnerable today. Is this true of your society?
6. Should people be allowed to enjoy greater freedom when they are unwilling to shoulder responsibilities?
7. 'We are too focused on the trivial.' Is this true?
8. How far have people benefitted from changes to the workplace?
9. 'The powerful always get away with crime'. Discuss.
10. Do you agree that it is important to know a foreign language today?
11. Should we really be concerned about consumerism today?
12. To what extent is the use of social media by politicians a positive development?



NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2019

8807/2

GENERAL PAPER

PAPER 2:

Friday 30 August 2019

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

This insert consists of 3 printed pages.

Dennis C. Rasmussen writes about economic inequality.

- 1 One of the more memorable statements of Barack Obama’s presidency thus far has been his claim, in a high-profile December 2013 speech, that the great and growing economic inequality is “the defining challenge of our time.” In making his case Obama appealed to the authority of a seemingly unlikely ally: Adam Smith, the purported founding father of laissez-faire capitalism, who is widely thought to have advocated unbridled greed and selfishness in the name of allowing the invisible hand of the market to work its magic. 5
- 2 Many a scholar has made a career, in recent decades, by pointing out that this view of Smith is a gross caricature. It has often been noted, for instance, that Smith never once used the term “laissez-faire” or even the term “capitalism,” and that his two books—*The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)—are full of passages lamenting the potential moral, social, and political ills of what he called “commercial society.” 10
- 3 It is also indisputable that the alleviation of poverty was one of Smith’s central concerns, the common caricature notwithstanding. Yet there remains a broad consensus, even among scholars of the period, that Smith was concerned by poverty but not by economic inequality itself. As long as everyone has food on their tables, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads, the thinking goes, it does not matter if some have far more than others. Indeed, it is often claimed that Smith saw economic inequality as a good thing. 15
- 4 Such a reading is not entirely unwarranted. Like many of his self-proclaimed followers in the 20th century, Smith did suggest that the great wealth of the few generally benefits the rest of society, at least in material terms and over the long run. In some cases, their luxuries trickle down in an almost literal sense: “The houses, the furniture, the clothing of the rich, in a little time, become useful to the inferior and middling ranks of people,” Smith writes. More broadly, he claims that the conspicuous consumption of the rich encourages productivity and provides employment for many. 20
- 5 What has received little attention is that he also identified some deep problems with economic inequality. The concerns that he voiced are interestingly different from those that dominate contemporary discourse. When people worry about inequality today, they generally worry that it inhibits economic growth, prevents social mobility, impairs democracy, or runs afoul of some standard of fairness. None of these problems, however, were Smith’s chief concern—that economic inequality distorts people’s “sympathies”, leading them to admire and emulate the very rich and to neglect and even scorn the poor. Smith used the term “sympathy” in a somewhat technical sense to denote the process of imaginatively projecting oneself into the situation of another person, or of putting oneself into another’s shoes. Smith’s “sympathy” is thus akin to the contemporary use of the word “empathy.” 25
- 6 What’s more, Smith saw this distortion of people’s sympathies as having profound consequences: It undermines both morality and happiness. First, morality. Smith saw the widespread admiration of the rich as morally problematic because he did not believe that the rich in fact tend to be terribly admirable people. In Smith’s view, the reason why the rich generally do not behave admirably is, ironically, that they are widely admired anyway (on account of their wealth). In other words, the rich are not somehow innately vicious people. Rather, their affluence puts them in a position in which they do not have to behave morally in order to earn the esteem of others, most of whom are dazzled and enchanted by their riches. Thus, it is precisely the presence of economic inequality, and the distortion of people’s sympathies that attends it, that allows—perhaps even encourages—the rich to spurn the most basic standards of moral conduct. Smith goes so far as to proclaim that the disposition to admire the rich and scorn the poor is the greatest cause of moral corruption. 30
40
45

- 7 Smith also believed that the tendency to sympathise with the rich more easily than the poor makes people less happy, and insisted not only that money cannot buy happiness but also that the pursuit of riches generally detracts from one's happiness. Happiness consists largely of tranquillity (a lack of internal discord), and there is little tranquility to be found in a life of toiling and striving to keep up with the Joneses. 50
- 8 Why, then, do the vast majority of people spend the vast majority of their lives longing for and pursuing wealth? Smith saw it as obvious that people do not work so hard in order to obtain food, clothing, and shelter but because of the attention it brings them: "It is the vanity, not the ease, or the pleasure, which interests us." In other words, it is the fact that people sympathise more easily with the rich that leads them to want to become rich themselves, and to (wrongly) assume that the rich must be supremely happy. 55
- 9 Much of Smith's analysis rings true today. The amount of media coverage of the lives and lifestyles of the rich and famous should suffice to confirm that even if people in today's commercial societies do not always admire the wealthy, they do generally sympathise with them in Smith's sense of the term—that is, people tend to put themselves in the wealthy's shoes—far more than they do with other people. Further, even if people do not always admire the wealthy either as individuals or as a group, there is little question that they are disposed to admire and pursue wealth itself with every bit of the fervour and doggedness that Smith expected. Finally, the other half of the distortion of people's sympathies that he describes—the tendency to unduly ignore the poor—is very much still present. 60
65
- 10 It is perhaps predictable that history's most famous theorist of commercial society would have something to add to contemporary debates about economic inequality. Given his reputation, however, it is striking that Smith had more profound and original things to say in opposition to inequality than in its defence. 70



NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2019

Candidate's Name: _____ Class: _____ GP Tutor: _____

GENERAL PAPER
PAPER 2:

8807/2
Friday 30 August 2019

1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.
No additional materials are required.

ANSWER BOOKLET

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your Name, Class, and GP Tutor's Name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen in the spaces provided on the Question Paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.
The insert contains the passage for comprehension.
Note that 15 marks out of 50 will be awarded for your use of language.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

For Examiner's Use	
SAQ	/17
Summary	/8
AQ	/10
Language	/15
TOTAL	/50

This document consists of 7 printed pages.

Read the passage in the Insert and then answer **all** the questions. Note that up to fifteen marks will be given for the quality and accuracy of your use of English throughout this Paper.

NOTE: When a question asks for an answer IN YOUR OWN WORDS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE and you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it. Little credit can be given to answers which only copy words or phrases from the passage.

1. What is the writer suggesting when he uses “thus far” in line 1?

[1]

2. By pointing out that Adam Smith is a “seemingly unlikely ally” in line 4, what is the writer implying about Barack Obama’s belief?

[2]

3. Explain **in your own words as far as possible** what the writer means by “this view of Smith is a gross caricature” (line 8).

[3]

6. What does “goes so far” imply about the writer’s view of Smith’s proclamation in line 45?

[1]

7. **In your own words as far as possible**, explain why “the vast majority of people spend the vast majority of their lives longing for and pursuing wealth” (lines 52-53).

[2]

8. Explain the use of brackets around the word “wrongly” in line 56.

[1]

9. According to the writer, “much of Smith’s analysis rings true today” (line 58). How does the paragraph support Smith’s analysis? **Use your own words as far as possible.**

[3]

10. **In your own words as far as possible**, explain the contradiction in the last sentence of the passage.

[2]

1) Consider the claim that young people in Singapore today are better educated, but no wiser.

A. Key words:

Better educated – When one is better educated, one is expected to possess not just academic knowledge, but also the full gamut of facts, information and skills (critical thinking, knowledge of actions and corresponding consequences, social norms and values etc) to better understand and navigate the world around us.

Note: Students ought to focus on how the young are better educated (i.e. the knowledge, disposition, values inculcated by better educational opportunities, more years of schooling) instead of why young Singaporeans are better educated (while a brief mention is acceptable, a long drawn-out description of why we implemented the compulsory education system runs the risk of irrelevance).

Wise - sensible or prudent; having or showing the ability to make good judgment, based on a deep understanding and experience of life. A wise person is able to use his experience and knowledge in order to make sensible/mature/insightful decisions and judgments that are good for self and society.

Context - Question requires a discussion of the nature of Singapore society that influences the mindset and attitudes of the young.

B. Approach

Part A: Why it is perceived that young Singaporeans are better educated but not wiser

Part B: Refute Part A

Part C: Why young Singaporeans are better educated and wiser

C. Arguments

Part A: Why it is perceived that young Singaporeans are better educated but not wiser

1. **Young Singaporeans may be book smart, but many still display a lack of knowledge and understanding of the complexities and expectations of the real world due to an education system that is excessively focused on grades.**

How young Singaporeans are better educated:

- Singapore's education system has been much lauded for its growing number of achievements and its ability to establish a strong foundation in reading, numeracy and scientific literacy for all students. As a result, Singapore currently ranks at the top of global benchmarking tests such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is a triennial test of 15-year-olds globally, in the three main categories of maths, reading and science.

How young Singaporeans are not wiser:

- However, despite stellar academic accomplishments, Singaporean youth have not managed to apply what is essentially academic knowledge to life outside of school.

- Many youth are often criticised for being either unrealistic in their expectations of life or lacking in real world experience that will enable them to make wise decisions about their lives e.g. in career.
- In a study carried out by online recruitment site Monster.com, fresh graduates in Singapore have high, even unrealistic, expectations after securing their first jobs. They expect quick professional development and the chance to earn higher salaries within the first year, or they will move on. At the same time, they admitted to a lack of industry knowledge and being unprepared for working life and long hours. Singapore employers have thus complained of the millennials' sense of entitlement and their easy inclination to quit when their expectations are not met.

Why young Singaporeans are not wiser:

- Wisdom is cultivated from exposure to the real world and its varied experiences to derive insight into self and the society around us.
- However, an education system like ours that is excessively focused on results and which compromises the accumulation of real world experience naturally inhibits the development of wisdom. More time and energy is placed on drilling to achieve excellent grades and less on exposure to the real world. Service learning, work attachment experiences are superficial because of insufficient time/attention given even though these are valuable opportunities to develop maturity. Even if these programmes were emphasised, the focus is not on the life lessons conveyed but on the pragmatic benefit of how participation may enhance one's testimonial.

2. Young people in Singapore may be better educated and yet, they lack wisdom because they grow up in a sheltered and overly protective environment.

How young Singaporeans are better educated:

- Students are exposed to programmes (e.g. CCAs/team or project-based learning) that aim to promote character growth and independent learning. Through reflection of their involvement in these programmes, students are expected to develop independent thought and a better understanding of themselves.

How young Singaporeans are not wiser:

- Despite these programmes, our youth have not developed wisdom. Many students do not question actively, they do not take risks and are afraid of failure even though lessons learned from failure are important in the path towards true wisdom.
- Young Singaporeans are also heavily reliant on instructions from authority figures around them (teachers, parents, government) and fail to demonstrate independent thought which is a hallmark of wisdom. An independent thinker observes more completely and thinks more profoundly about the choices one makes in life. It means one does not follow the opinion of others blindly, but analyses and synthesises all sources of input and information to form a sensible and informed opinion.

Why young Singaporeans are not wiser:

- With growing affluence and with most couples having fewer children, children have become the most precious of all possessions and this has led to the rise of helicopter parenting.

Overprotective, over-controlling and intrusive, helicopter parents orchestrate and monitor the activities of their children and sweep away any obstacles in their path. Similarly, teachers and the government, with its considerable number of regulations on citizens' lives, are constantly telling our youth what they should or should not be doing.

- All these end up stunting the development of independence, savviness and street-smarts in our youth as they are not given the freedom to explore, to fail and learn crucial life lessons.
- A recent MOE Facebook post highlighted ways in which one could be a helicopter parent which include debating with your child's teacher to get one more mark for a grade improvement, doing his project for him, and "flying" to school with his homework when he forgets to bring it, and gave advice on how to avoid such behaviour. That such a campaign had to be implemented highlights how concerned we are about the effects of helicopter parenting on the development of our children.

3. Young Singaporeans may be better educated and yet they behave in an irresponsible manner largely due to the influence of social media.

How young Singaporeans are better educated:

- Schools in Singapore focus on the importance of teaching the young to think critically and to reflect on their actions through civics and life skills lessons. It is assumed that this would instill awareness of consequences and prudence in decision-making. Our education system also stresses on building a society that is caring and cohesive. Schools emphasise character building and subjects like Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) is made compulsory for all students in all schools. These lessons have made the educated realise that life would be more meaningful when guided by values.

How young Singaporeans are not wiser:

- One who is wise would show understanding of the consequences of one's actions and avoid behaving in a way that is wrong, bad or inappropriate for self and society. However, young Singaporeans are easily buoyed by popular culture so much so that they exhibit irresponsible behaviour despite being educated against such actions.
- Recently, an Instagram story of NTU students performing an obscene cheer during freshman orientation sparked controversy and investigation on the kind of childish behaviour exhibited by university (highly educated) students. Campus authorities have condemned the cheer as it does not uphold the 'values of safety, respect and inclusiveness.'
- Another example is the case of a Singaporean youth who was filmed pouring coke and curry down a high rise building for Instagram just because it was perceived to be 'fun' or 'cool'.
- There are also cases of teenage boys who have committed rash acts for social media attention such as throwing an off-bike off a HDB block and another case where bikes were thrown off Punggol bridge.

Why young Singaporeans are not wiser:

- Youth are naturally impressionable. Coupled with the fact that our young belongs to the digital generation, where social media's 'liking culture' latches on young people's desire for affirmation – especially from friends – and popularity, as well as the need to be noticed, Singaporean youth often end up acting impulsively and demonstrating poor judgement. Social media platforms inadvertently advocate an individualistic attitude where the young dismiss the impact of their actions on society in favour of media attention.

Part B: Refute Part A

4. However, our education system acknowledges these criticisms and has already implemented changes in order to nurture a wiser generation.

How the education system is changing:

- There is growing recognition that our nation's continued growth and progress is at stake if we do not rectify the problem of an immature generation.
- In a major shift from the transactional approach of sitting and clearing exams, the local education ministry has implemented significant changes at all levels to nurture a generation that is prepared for the real world.
 - More secondary school students will also be exposed to applied learning, which integrates learning with real-world situations. There is also stronger emphasis on outdoor education. All secondary students from 2020 onwards will take part in three cohort camps during their school years. Singapore is also taking bold steps to make the transition between study and work seamless. Apprenticeships, extended work stints and internships are in. For example, the Earn and Learn scheme, a SkillsFuture initiative introduced in phases since last year, incentivises fresh polytechnic and ITE graduates to work and gain qualifications at the same time.
- There is stronger partnership between schools and parents to help students develop independence.
 - Schools such as Bukit Timah Primary, CHIJ Primary (Toa Payoh) have issued guidelines to parents to avoid delivering forgotten items to their children and urged parents to teach their children to resolve the problem independently. Most parents have responded well to this guideline.
- Students are also being taught the importance of being a positive peer influence online and responsible use of social media as part of a revised cyber wellness framework

How the changes will lead to wisdom:

- These new changes focus on experiences that go beyond the classroom (grades), so that children are exposed to real world problems, and acquire important values and life lessons that will help them to make sensible and mature decisions in future.

Part C: Why young Singaporeans are better educated and wiser

5. It is unfair to claim that young Singaporeans are unwise as they have also shown the ability to act in a sensible and mature manner because of better education.

How better education has led to wisdom.

- Our values-driven education has led to a generation that is more accepting, and hence respectful, of diverse practices and cultures and also a generation that is more socially aware. Moreover, the exposure to diverse opinions in the classroom, especially in liberal arts institutions, has taught students how to engage effectively with perspectives that differ from theirs.

How is wisdom shown:

- There are many young bloggers (e.g. Jeraldine Phneah) in Singapore who give critical and sensible analyses on hot-button issues such as elitism in our education system and discrimination.
- Many young Singaporeans are also involved in acts of kindness as they are aware of their social responsibility and the value of their contributions to the community, and not just for the sake of looking good on a resume.
 - Rise of young social entrepreneurs in Singapore: Foreword Coffee – a café that aims to brew up quality jobs for people with disabilities is opened by two 25-year old NUS graduates - Lim Wei Jie and Anderson Ang. The commitment to do good through business stems from the duo's understanding of the challenges faced by the disabled and their aspiration for a more inclusive society.



2) Do international organisations have real influence over global affairs today?

A. Key Words

International organisations

- An international organization is an organization with an international membership, scope, or presence.
- Intergovernmental organizations, also known as international governmental organizations (IGOs): the type of organization most closely associated with the term 'international organization', these are organizations that are made up primarily of sovereign states (referred to as member states). E.g. The United Nations (UN), The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), The European Union (EU), The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) etc.
- International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs): non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate internationally. E.g. international non-profit organization such as Amnesty International, International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières etc.
- Their aims include: fostering cooperation between countries to achieve global/mutually beneficial goals e.g. economic advancement, reduction of conflict etc.

Global affairs

- Significant political, economic or social events that are of interest to other countries and/or have a global impact
- Includes wars, conflicts, human rights issues, environmental issues, disasters, trade etc.

Influence

- Power; ability to alter or affect the outcomes of global affairs through assertion of the organisation's will/authority, or influence other countries to pursue a course of action

Real

- The question requires students to evaluate whether international organisations have actual/significant influence over global affairs.
- Students need to consider what enables international organisations to assert power/control over other countries – military power, economic clout (financial resources), legal authority – as well as the constraints/limitations to its influence.

B. Approach

Part A: While international organisations may seem to be able to influence global affairs,

Part B: in reality, the limitations that they face constrain their ability to assert real influence.



C. Arguments

Part A: International organisations are perceived to be able to influence global affairs.

- 1. International organisations are believed to be able to put international pressure on governments to modify their policies towards an issue, cease violence, or extend more aid to their people due to their ability to tap on the collective power of the member states to exert political or economic pressure as a whole to make states to bend to their will.**
 - A classic success story would be the case of Libya which took responsibility for the 1988 Lockerbie bombings and renounced its weapons of mass destruction program in 2004 under broad U.S. and UN sanctions pressure. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-sanctions-mixed-record>
- 2. International organisations which have a large membership, have the ability to amass a significant pool of resources such as funds, manpower and supplies, enabling them to assert their influence when intervening in crises around the world.**
 - E.g. The International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Union came together to provide bailout packages totalling 289 billion Euros over eight years to rescue Greece from its 2009 financial crisis, enabling Greece to remain as a member of the Eurozone, and averting the possibility of financial contagion. As part of its loan conditions, IMF was also able to force Greece to implement austerity measures, structural reforms and privatization of government assets.

Part B: in reality, the limitations that they face constrain their ability to assert real influence.

- 1. International organisations have little influence over the affairs of countries which have the power and means to resist the economic and political pressure put on them.**
 - **Such countries have abundant resources and clout, and are able to survive even if they are isolated by the international community.**
 - E.g. EU's sanctions on Russia for its annexation of Crimea have failed to coerce Russia into returning Crimea to Ukraine due to its limited impact on Russia's economy. While sanctions have stunted economic growth in Russia, they have done little to undermine Russia's economic stability due to Russia's massive stockpile of reserves which continued to grow partly due to its windfall from higher oil prices, reaching nearly \$460 billion in 2018.
 - https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-keeps-getting-hit-with-sanctions-do-they-make-a-difference/2018/08/21/f466db1c-a3ec-11e8-ad6f-080770dcddc2_story.html
 - **Such countries have the support of other powerful allies that they can rely on**
 - E.g. Despite the U.N.'s long history of sanctions on North Korea, North Korea has continually refused to cease its nuclear development programme. North Korea was able to cushion the impact of these sanctions due to its strong bilateral ties with rich and powerful friends like China and Russia. China accounts for at least 90 per cent of North Korean trade and is thus a key pillar of the isolated state's economy. Besides China, North Korea has trade relations with Russia. The two countries have signed deals to increase

bilateral trade to US\$1 billion by 2020 and build a railway connecting the Russian border to Rajin in North Korea.

- <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/why-un-sanctions-fail-to-tame-n-korean-menace>

2. The power of international organisations is dependent on the cooperation of its member states who contribute their military/economic might. Yet, disagreements between countries that make up such organisations as a result of differing viewpoints or conflicting interests can undermine their ability to assert a significant influence in global affairs.

- E.g. the United Nations Security Council comprises 15 members, 5 of which are permanent members who hold the power to strike down any resolution they disagree with. While the council could theoretically impose collective military action to enforce international peace and security, its ability to do so is often constrained by the failure to achieve compromise amongst member states who end up withholding support for such missions. In 2018, Russia's use of its veto meant there was no prospect of the Security Council authorizing the use of force despite US, UK and France being prepared for military action against the Assad regime for its use of chemical weapons.
- Other material and economic interests are also at play. China, one of the permanent members on the UN Security Council, has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to bypass the UN's directive and maintain significant trade relations with countries (South Sudan) that have been threatened with UN-mandated sanctions.
- This has led many in the international community to regard the UN as a paper tiger with no real power over the nations of the world.

3. The power that international organisations are able to exert is dependent on the willingness and consensus of countries to accept their authority or jurisdiction. Ultimately, international organisations do not have absolute authority over other states. Countries still reserve their right to assert their sovereignty and reject actions taken by international organisations to meddle in their affairs when it does not fit their strategic interests.

- E.g. China, which claims 90% of the South China Sea according to the nine-dash line, rejected the Hague Tribunal's 2016 ruling that stated there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the nine-dash line and managed to continue its land reclamation efforts on the various reefs in the South China Sea despite international condemnation and pressure.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/12/philippines-wins-south-china-sea-case-against-china>



3) Results are more important than processes in scientific research. To what extent do you agree?

Key Terms

Scientific research

The application of the scientific method to investigate any relationships amongst natural phenomena or to solve a technical or medical problem.

Results are more important than processes

Implication here is that there is **greater significance/value** given to the outcomes of scientific research than the methods which are undertaken to produce the outcomes

What students need to be aware of: Objectives of scientific research

The purpose of research varies across different scientific fields and disciplines.

Pure scientific research:

- is about explaining the world around us and trying to understand how the universe operates;
- is also about finding out what is already there without any greater purpose of research than the explanation itself;
- often has indirect/ incidental benefits, which can contribute greatly to the advancement of humanity. (e.g. pure research into the structure of the atom has led to x-rays, nuclear power and silicon chips).

Applied scientists, on the other hand,:

- might look for definitive and comprehensive answers to specific questions that help humanity (e.g. medical research or environmental studies)

Suggested Approach

1. Acknowledge the question's assumption that it is generally perceived that the results of scientific research hold greater importance than the processes as the outcomes are used for the betterment of humanity in many different areas. The idea here is that the ends justify the means.
2. Specify the conditions in which the methods used in scientific research become unacceptable/breach moral boundaries and the results are unable to justify the severe repercussions, i.e. means do not justify the end results.

Stand

While it is true that the results of scientific research are important in helping us in finding solutions and cures to many of mankind's problems, their value becomes questionable when there is transgression of moral/social limits during the processes of attaining these results. In such cases, the results are not more important.

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Results are more important than processes

For many in the scientific community, so long as the results bring about real progress that improves the quality of life of people, the tediousness of the process or the questionable practices involved in acquiring the results are considered worthwhile.

- The majority of scientific researchers seem to justify potentially questionable practices based on the moral theory of consequentialism, stating that the morality of an action depends mainly on the overall outcome and not how the results are achieved (“the end justifies the means”).
- Additionally, as ethical concerns are often subjective, many believe that it is unjustified to allow the concerns of a few to prevent the larger society from benefitting from the results of scientific research.
- E.g. Hence, animal testing in biomedical research can, despite the pain-causing procedures and sacrifice of animals, be justified because the outcome, e.g. medical progresses that benefit millions of people, give an overall positive outcome (“the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers”).

For some, the pursuit of self-interest often justifies paying more attention to results rather than the appropriateness of the processes.

- Results from scientific research are more valuable to businesses. Many companies invest in research and development solely for the securing of vantage points over their competitors.
- Different business industries with science and engineering processes like agriculture, food and beverage, manufacturing, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, computer software, semiconductor, information and communication technology, construction, robotics, aerospace, aviation, and energy have high R&D expenditure because the results of the research are critical to product innovation and to improving services.
- Similarly, countries/governments have invested heavily in scientific research, in a bid to outdo other countries in terms of innovation or military might. The focus on success has at points in history disregarded ethics, e.g. human experimentation

Results are not more important than processes

When the morality of scientific practices is compromised and there is in them a severe lack of respect for the sanctity of human life, then far more is lost than could potentially be reaped from such research.

- One of the main goals of scientific research is to improve the quality of life for humankind. However, if the processes that lead to such a goal threaten the sanctity of life or necessitates the killing of human life, then the potential value of the results (especially if success has not been seen) becomes obviously insignificant.
- E.g. Therapeutic cloning + embryonic stem cell research to provide a ready supply of replacement cells, tissue or organs

It is more important to look at the ways that scientific research is conducted to ensure integrity and quality results. Funding bias and data faking could skew results which would ultimately be of little value to humanity's progression.

- Even if ethical considerations may limit possible scientific breakthroughs and discoveries, they are still necessary to keep the methods of scientific research in check. These help to help build public support and sustain funding for research. Without the focus on how scientific research is carried out, the continuity of scientific development itself would be threatened.

- E.g. federal policies on research misconduct, conflicts of interest, the human subjects protections, and animal care and use are necessary in order to make sure that the researchers who are funded by public money can be held accountable to the public.
- E.g. Disgraced South Korean scientist, Hwang Woo-suk, and the faked data in his stem cell studies



4) 'Fantasy novels offer little apart from enjoyment.' Discuss.

Key terms:

Fantasy novels

Fantasy

- Make-believe
- Contain unrealistic settings or magic, possibly involving mythical beings or supernatural forms as a primary element of the plot, theme, or setting.

Novels

- an invented prose narrative that is **usually long** and complex and deals with human experience through a connected sequence of events.

Enjoyment

- the action of providing or being provided with amusement, entertainment or pleasure

Offer little apart from

- implies fantasy novels do not serve any function other than enjoyment
- this function [enjoyment] is hardly a significant one
- is dismissive of the value of enjoyment

Suggested Approach:

- a) Explain why fantasy novels are perceived by some to be insignificant/has no real value as they only provide enjoyment.
- b) Address the dismissive attitude that people have of enjoyment. Highlight the inherent value of enjoyment.
- c) Refute the claim made in the question by showing that fantasy novel have other significant functions and offer more than enjoyment.

Part A: Explain why fantasy novels are perceived by some to be insignificant/has no real value as they only provide enjoyment

- **The genre has been disparaged as popular literature offering only escapism with little relevance to the realities of life or the struggles of day-to-day living.**
 - Magic and the supernatural are the most common central features of fantasy (JK Rowling's Harry Potter series, Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy, CS Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, myths, etc.). In these novels, the protagonists often possess powers that have supernatural or even extra-terrestrial origins. **These powers are not available to real people and have little relevance to everyday life.**
 - They deal with **situations that are unrealistic** and which people are unlikely to encounter (e.g. The Wizard of Oz by Frank Baum, Wicked by Gregory Maguire, On A Pale Horse by Anthony Piers, Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis, etc.)

Part B: Address the dismissive attitude that people have of enjoyment. Highlight the inherent value of enjoyment

- The fact that fantasy novels are enjoyable do not diminish their value. Enjoyment is much needed in today's world as it is **a means of diverting people's attention from their demanding and stressful lives** and **amuses them** in their leisure time.
 - Fantasy novels offer **exciting scenarios and possibilities**. They offer, even if only for a short time, a universe filled with wonder and excitement. The popularity of fantasy novels, as evidenced by their consistent inclusion in best seller lists like the New York Times Best Sellers, demonstrates their enduring capacity to distract people, albeit temporarily, from the realities of life.
 - Whether it is terrorist attacks, rising crime rates, the threat of economic disasters, gender inequality or infectious diseases, our world is on a constant knife-edge. In troubled times like these, **people enjoy escapism**, and perhaps secretly wish that there were magic and superheroes around to fix the troubles of the world.
- **Although fantasy novels entertain us with made-up storylines and characters, the themes underlying such stories are universal. They actually make us think about our own struggles in life and what we need to do to overcome them.**
 - The people who consume fantasy books value good, compelling stories featuring characters they can identify with and who **inspire them** to endure their own difficulties.
 - E.g. (Mythological) storylines involving gods, demi-gods, magical creatures and ordinary people, all of whom are involved in the struggles of right and wrong; and the balance of power with responsibility, etc. are **concerns common to all of us**. (E.g. A Game of Thrones, Howl's Moving Castle, The Hobbit, Lord of the Rings trilogy, etc.)
 - The storylines in fantasy novels often **reflect social ills/problems** even though they are set in a make-believe world. While some fantasy novels are written as wish-fulfilment yet others may reflect and **encourage consideration** of current and possible future ills. They may be projection into the future/a made-up universe of the possible and logical development of current trends.
 - E.g. The Bartimeaus Sequence by Jonathan Stroud, a middle grade series for readers looking for their next magical fix, hide powerful, deeply progressive messages about colonialism, civil rights, and inequality within a thrilling, cheekily humorous fantasy story
 - E.g. *Midnight Robber* by Nalo Hopkinson
A coming-of-age novel by Jamaican-Canadian writer Hopkinson, nominated for the Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K. Dick awards explores the search for identity, the sufferings of marginalized individuals and how they must act to overcome prejudice and discrimination

Part C: Refute the claim made in the question by showing that fantasy novel have other significant functions which offer more than enjoyment.

- **The entertainment function of fantasy novels also has important economic value.**
 - Fantasy novels are **important contributors to the publishing business**. Fantasy books are one of the top selling genres especially for children.
 - In the entertainment industry adaptations of fantasy novels are currently amongst the most **profitable franchises for movies**. They set new entertainment trends for society and contribute to the growth of new (and bankable) narratives in Hollywood.
 - E.g. Star Wars, Alice in Wonderland, Lord of the Rings, Wizard of Oz, etc.

- **Fantasy novels also help to promote personal expression and nurture creativity.**
 - It **promotes imaginative thinking** and encourages the expression of that imagination in a way that is fun and non-threatening. Hence, fantasy are effective in nurturing creativity, a core competency for success in the 21st century.
 - E.g. Many readers of fantasy novels are not just passive consumers, but find **comradeship** among their fellow fans via writing *fanfiction* which is usually inspired by what they read. They also showcase their **creativity** through activities such as *cosplay*.



5) Not enough is done for the vulnerable today. Is this true of your society?

Stand 1: Not enough is done for the vulnerable today

Key Words

The vulnerable:

- Students can characterise this group of people as those who are unable to defend themselves from or withstand adverse impacts from multiple stressors in society e.g. skyrocketing living costs, economic uncertainty, societal expectations and norms.
- A broad enough spectrum of individuals should be discussed in the essay: the elderly, the economically disadvantaged, children/ minors, those with chronic health conditions including the mentally ill etc.

Enough:

as much as is necessary; in the amount or to the degree needed

Not enough is done:

- Implies that the effort put in by society and our government's policies/reforms aimed at taking care of the interests of the vulnerable are inadequate to ensure that there is social equity.

Today

- Discussion should be about Singapore's current policies/ measures/ efforts and current situation. (there is no necessity to look at the past or into the future)

APPROACH 1

Stand: Not enough is being done for the vulnerable today

Part A: Acknowledge that Singapore has increased measures/ efforts that cater to the vulnerable members of the Singapore society and how this has given many people the perception that enough is done for the vulnerable.

Part B: However, these measures / efforts are not enough to meet the needs of the more vulnerable members of the Singapore society

Arguments

Part A: Acknowledge that Singapore has increased measures/ efforts that cater to the vulnerable members of the Singapore society and how this has given many people the perception that enough is done for the vulnerable.

1. The Singapore government has indeed put in place many measures to meet the needs of the more vulnerable members of the Singapore society, which could have given many people the perception that enough has been done for the vulnerable.

- Elderly – Extension of retirement age; Pioneer Generation & Merdeka Generation package; ComCare Long Term Assistance, Silver Support Scheme

- Intellectually challenged – Pathlight school & Rainbow centre
- Physically Disabled – Physical modification to infrastructure to facilitate mobility
- Low wage workers and their families – Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme for those earning less than \$2,300 per month; Fresh Start Housing Scheme to help families with young children in rental flats buy a second HDB flat of their own; Financial Assistance Scheme to ensure that every young person in Singapore has access to education;
- Minorities – The Presidential Council for Minority Rights (PCMR) is a non-elected government body in Singapore established in 1970, the main function of which is to scrutinize most of the bills passed by Parliament to ensure that they do not discriminate against any racial or religious community.

2. There has also been **increased attention** paid to the needs and interests of the more vulnerable by **other stakeholders** (not just the government) within the Singapore community, further reinforcing the perception that enough is done for the vulnerable today.

- The rich and powerful in our society have been using their wealth and influence to set up foundations and galvanise others into action in a bid to change the lives of the vulnerable. These foundations aim to provide the vulnerable with the help they need to achieve their dreams as well as serve as a form of intervention to prevent the vulnerable from being left behind.
 - Peter Lim, who owns Thomson Medical Group, donated \$10 million to the Singapore Olympic Foundation in 2010 to set up the SOF-Peter Lim Scholarship, which helps promising young athletes from low-income families achieve their sporting goals.
 - The Lien Foundation donated \$12 million to address the widening gap of inequality and barriers that children in low-income families face in navigating health, social services and education systems.
- Increasing number of self-help groups and charities set up by ordinary Singaporeans who are concerned about the problems faced by the vulnerable. These organisations connect the vulnerable to the institutions that can provide them employment or counselling services as well as establishments that can rectify the injustices they encounter. This allows the vulnerable to get timely assistance and indirectly gives them the support system they need to deal with their problems.
 - Jeremy Chua, who was behind SG Haze Rescue, a community initiative that called for people to donate their excess masks and mobilised hundreds of volunteers to distribute them to the needy.
 - Five Cents Project, a charitable initiative started by a Singaporean youth, Adrian Foo, which collects our 'useless' 5-cent coins to raise money for needy elderly in society.

Part B: However, these measures / efforts are **not enough** to meet the needs of the vulnerable members of the Singapore society

3. Admittedly, there are many measures and efforts in place to help the vulnerable but their impact on the lives of some of the vulnerable is **superficial, as they tend to treat the symptoms and not the root cause** of the vulnerability. Most of the measures and efforts target the physical and to some extent, the emotional needs of the vulnerable but not their psychological

vulnerability, which is primarily caused by the entrenched mind-set and prejudice of Singaporeans.

- Not enough is done to tackle ageism as there has not been any fundamental change in Singaporeans personal beliefs, assumptions and attitudes towards older workers especially among employers and even policy makers themselves. The same prejudice is also observed in attitudes towards the disabled. Hence, as long as Singaporeans still hold stereotypes of these vulnerable groups of people and are prejudiced against them, those who are vulnerable would remain vulnerable.
- Based on the findings of the Diversity & Inclusion study, which surveyed more than 100 HR leaders for large companies and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) in Singapore, almost 60% felt their companies were not doing enough to support the disabled. The survey also suggests that ageism remains a prevalent issue among Singapore's workplaces. One in four respondents felt older workers faced discrimination in their workplace, while ageism comes in as the second-biggest issue faced by companies in Singapore at 28% after the inclusion of people with disabilities (38%). Only 16% of all companies surveyed had diversity and inclusion policies that covered people with disabilities, and only a third (35%) had policies that cover age discrimination.

4. To assess whether enough has been done for the vulnerable, one needs to ascertain whether the measures and efforts in place are not mere stopgap measures but are effective in bringing about positive change. In Singapore, unfortunately, efforts to help the vulnerable are often not enough to empower them to make significant change to better their lives in the long term.

- Though financial help is given to the poor, the aid schemes demand that the poor must exhaust their finances first or show proof that they are really in financial trouble before they can receive help. The monetary aid to the low-income family often does not assuage all their financial woes nor are they able to make any significant change in their way of life to enable them to escape from the poverty cycle. Many remain poor and disempowered and this has serious implications on their children as well. Poor families are not likely to have sufficient financial resources to provide nutritious food for their children and this has long-term impact on their development. Neither are poor families able to provide conducive environment for their children to do well academically. Hence, children from poor families are more likely to experience developmental delays and learning difficulties compared to their peers.
 - People with lower income already forgo spending that higher-income people consider basic needs, including educational needs such as tuition, nutritious food, healthcare, and leisure and social activities important for overall well-being," said Associate Professor Teo You Yenn, head of sociology at the Nanyang Technological University.
- Money alone is a short-term, one-time solution that can only do so much to significantly change the lives of the vulnerable for the better. The weak and helpless require society's sustained attention and assistance, not just because of the complexity of the wide-ranging problems that they may face but also because of their lack of voice in our society. This

means the vulnerable need others in society, ordinary Singaporeans, to help raise their woes and concerns to the relevant authorities.

5. **Another criteria that can be used to gauge whether enough has been done for the vulnerable today is to assess whether measures and efforts in place are inclusive enough so as not to alienate any group. Based on this criteria, not only is there not enough been done for the vulnerable but Singaporean pro-family legislation and law enforcement openly discriminate the LGBT community as well as unmarried mothers in Singapore. This illustrates how tyranny of the conservative majority has continued to alienate the vulnerable.**
- An overwhelming proportion of Singaporeans agree that people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community still face discrimination in Singapore. Four in five Singaporeans (80 per cent) strongly or somewhat agree that such discrimination exists here, according to findings from an online survey commissioned by Yahoo News Singapore. The survey, conducted by Blackbox Research, polled 887 Singaporeans between 13 and 26 June 2019. From a legal viewpoint, there are several sections of the Penal Code that impede the freedom of the gay community in Singapore. The most prominent, and most frequently challenged, is Section 377A which states that so-called “acts of gross indecency” between men can be met with imprisonment of up to two years. The T Project, a shelter for homeless transgender persons, was not granted registration as a non-profit group by the authorities on the basis that their services were "contrary to national interests".
 - Currently, unwed mothers do not get the Baby Bonus cash gift and parenthood tax rebates, and have to wait until they are 35 years old to buy a Housing Board flat under the singles scheme. Approximately 10,000 children have been born out of wedlock in Singapore from 2006 to 2016.



5) Not enough is done for the vulnerable today. Is this true of your society?

Stand 2: Enough is done for the vulnerable today

A. Key Words

The vulnerable:

- Students can characterise this group of people as those who are unable to defend themselves from or withstand adverse impacts from multiple stressors in society e.g. skyrocketing living costs, economic uncertainty, societal expectations and norms.
- A broad enough spectrum of individuals should be discussed in the essay: the elderly, the economically disadvantaged, children/ minors, those with chronic health conditions including the mentally ill etc.

Not enough is done:

- Implies that the effort put in by society and our government's policies/reforms aimed at taking care of the interests of the vulnerable are inadequate.

B. Approach

Stand: Untrue that not enough is done for the vulnerable in Singapore

Part A: State the current efforts meant to address the needs of the vulnerable and why they are considered inadequate.

Part B: Show that in reality, there is increased/ adequate attention paid to their needs and interests.

C. Arguments

Part A: State the current efforts meant to address the needs of the vulnerable and why they are considered inadequate.

- 1. Singaporeans are generally known to be generous with donations but are either unwilling or unable to dedicate time, energy and resources to help improve the lives of vulnerable groups of people.**

Why effort is considered inadequate

- Donations do aid the cash-strapped in managing their daily expenses but money alone is a short-term, one-time solution that can only do so much to significantly change the lives of the vulnerable for the better. The weak and helpless require society's sustained attention and assistance, not just because of the complexity of the wide-ranging problems that they may face but also because of their lack of voice in our society (e.g. migrant workers). This means the vulnerable need others in society, ordinary Singaporeans, to help raise their woes and concerns to the relevant authorities.

Why Singaporeans are unwilling or unable to do more

- Singaporeans are too caught up in the busyness of their lives so much so they feel there is little time for anything else apart from their personal commitments. In addition, with the

rise of individualism and the pursuit of the material, Singaporeans are more focused on their personal ambitions and aspirations than communal needs. Many also do not understand the struggles Singapore's vulnerable go through because the latter are hardly visible in our rich country and hence people rarely witness or hear their stories.

2. There are indeed laws and policies that aim to protect the vulnerable but these focus only on their physical needs and may not address the root of the problems faced by the vulnerable.

Why effort is considered inadequate

- Governmental measures are often limited to addressing economic uncertainty and financial hardship faced by the vulnerable as well as building infrastructure that caters to the needs of the elderly and the disabled. The government seems to overlook the anxiety the vulnerable may feel in facing their difficulties due to the lack of a proper support system or as a result of living from pay-check to pay-check. Even when the government does extend monetary aid to the vulnerable, this is often over a finite period of time and usually does not assuage all their financial woes.

Why government unwilling or unable to do more

- The Singapore government has always encouraged a culture of self-reliance and this perhaps explains the reluctance to provide long-term assistance to the vulnerable.

Part B: Show that in reality, there is increased/ adequate attention paid to the needs and interests of the vulnerable.

1. We should not be too quick to dismiss the impact donations have on the lives of the vulnerable when the flow of such donations is sustainable and persistent, considering the deep pockets and commitment of some donors.

Why effort is considered adequate

- The rich and powerful in our society have used their wealth and influence to set up foundations and galvanise others into action in a bid to change the lives of the vulnerable. These foundations aim to provide the vulnerable with the help they need to achieve their dreams as well as serve as a form of intervention to prevent the vulnerable from being left behind.
 - Peter Lim, who owns Thomson Medical Group, donated \$10 million to the Singapore Olympic Foundation in 2010 to set up the SOF-Peter Lim Scholarship, which helps promising young athletes from low-income families achieve their sporting goals.
 - The Lien Foundation donated \$12 million to address the widening gap of inequality and barriers that children in low-income families face in navigating health, social services and education systems.
- Furthermore, there is an increasing number of self-help groups and charities set up by ordinary Singaporeans who are concerned about the problems faced by the vulnerable. These organisations connect the vulnerable to the institutions that can provide them

employment or counselling services as well as establishments that can rectify the injustices they encounter. This allows the vulnerable to get timely assistance and indirectly gives them the support system they need to deal with their problems.

2. While government bodies themselves are seen as extending limited assistance to the vulnerable, the government has empowered charities to fill in the gaps that the government may not be able to fill.

Why effort is considered adequate

- Government funding has helped to cover administrative costs incurred by VWOs in running their programmes and hence enabled them to use their funds to truly address the needs of the vulnerable.
- The government also provides dollar-for-dollar matching on donations to the Empowering for Life Fund (ELF) and this has significantly boosted the money available for the most vulnerable to upgrade their skills and find jobs.
- The government also provides a 250% tax deduction to encourage businesses to do more for the disadvantaged and helpless in our society. This ensures that corporations will be more keen to use their influence and financial capacity to give back to the community. Such a collective effort helps the government to cater to more people in need of help in our society.



10) Do you agree that it is important to know a foreign language today?

Foreign language

- Foreign language can be defined from two different perspectives:
 - From the perspective of the society/country: A language that is not commonly spoken in the country e.g. German would be a foreign language to Singaporeans but Malay would not be a foreign language to Singaporeans
 - From the perspective of the individual: A language that is not one's native tongue / that one did not grow up speaking e.g. an immigrant from Syria to the USA would see English as a foreign language

To know

- To have an adequate level of proficiency in a foreign language such that one can communicate sufficiently with speakers of the foreign language

Important

- To prove important: Candidates need to discuss the (more significant) benefits of knowing a foreign language
- To prove not important: Candidates need to explain why it's not important to know a foreign language today but showing that knowing a foreign language is not really beneficial or that it's unnecessary for people to know a foreign language today. Any discussion of the negative costs/impact of knowing/learning a foreign language is not central to the issue in the question.

Today

- The importance of knowing a foreign language needs to take into consideration the current characteristics/context of today's world e.g. globalisation, technological advancements etc.

Stand: Agree – It is important to know a foreign language today

- A) Explain why it is important to know a foreign language today due to the immense economic, political and social benefits it can bring.
- B) Address why some may claim that recent developments seem to have diminished the importance of knowing a foreign language today (given the ease of access to various means of overcoming language barriers)
- C) Point out the limitations of (B)

A) Important

- 1) **With greater global interactions between companies from different countries and more companies trying to break into overseas markets, knowing a foreign language will give both individuals and corporations access to more business/employment opportunities as it will grant individuals the cultural capital that is needed to communicate both effectively and culturally to individuals from the other parts of the world.**

- China is the world's largest trading power, with a total international trade value of US\$4.62 trillion in 2018. It is also a country where business relations are highly socially

embedded. The ability to speak mandarin and navigate cultural gaps would make it easier for foreign investors to establish social relationships or guanxi with Chinese companies, which are crucial to gain access to more opportunities in China's huge market.

2) Knowing a foreign language is important for fostering social cohesion in countries that are increasingly diverse and multicultural due to globalisation. For migrants especially, learning the language of their new country indicates a **willingness to integrate and avoid isolation, and enables them to communicate easily without barriers and build more meaningful relationships** with the local community.

- For instance, Germany in 2016 introduced integration laws for refugees and one part involved the learning of German. In the Netherlands, this is the same too, where foreign nationals who migrate to the Netherlands must learn Dutch because the Dutch government believes that every migrant must speak Dutch in order to participate in the Dutch society.

3) Knowing a foreign language is also important in enhancing national security as terrorist attacks are becoming increasingly transnational and borderless in nature. The knowledge of a foreign language or multiple foreign languages will enable countries to better decode intelligence they gather from espionage or surveillance on hostile countries or terrorist groups.

- Over the last two decades, Washington has poured millions of dollars into finding and training Arabic and Russian-speaking researchers and analysts as part of their counterterrorism efforts.

B) Some may claim that it is not important today.

4) Some may claim that it is not important to know a foreign language in order to communicate with people who speak a different language due to the ease of access to various means to overcome language barriers.

- a. The ease of hiring translators to provide accurate translations means that it is not important for companies or politicians to learn a foreign language to do business or build relationships with other countries.
- b. With advancements in technology, translation tools are now widely available and are increasingly accurate, making it unnecessary for the average person to learn a foreign language to communicate with others from a different country for practical purposes.
 - The Japanese company Logbar has created a device that allows for instantaneous translation: you only need to speak into it and it will translate what you say into the target language.
 - The help that is provided in the area of translation leads us to see no need to learn anymore languages than we need to. These days, the reservation of plane tickets is facilitated by online engines that provide the consumer with the option of choosing his/her preferred language. Also, online translation tools like Google Translate have also provided individuals with the added agency to make meaning of alternative languages. Thus, the inability to speak more than one language has been cushioned by the impact of technology in our daily lives.

C) Rebuttal to (B)

5) Yet, **the need to rely on external help to get one's point across can be a barrier to forming deeper relationships with others or even create misunderstandings.**

- Having to converse through a translator not only interrupts the flow of conversation but also makes it difficult for people to engage in direct banter with one another, which can help to foster warmer relationships with one another.
- Despite technology's rise in helping with translation, translation technology is simply not good enough yet to catch all the nuances and context of any language to offer a good and proper translation. Thus, miscommunications can still occur.
 - Any translation technology will also not be able to grasp the cultural nuances in manners of speaking and will only look to give the plainest and most direct translations possible. Google Translate is known for its literal translations of idiomatic phrases or proverbs and even complex sentences which fail to convey the original meaning of these phrases or sentences accurately.



11) Should we really be concerned about consumerism today?

A. Key Words

Consumerism: the human desire to own and obtain products and goods in excess of one's basic needs.

Really: Connotes doubt and scepticism. We need to examine the scepticism built in the question and question our concerns about consumerism.

Today: the consumption habits of today's society as well as changing attitudes towards consumerism must be discussed in the essay.

B. Approach:

Part A: Discuss the problems associated with consumerism

Part B: Explain why the concerns in part A are no longer as significant/serious.

Part C: Discuss how consumerism may actually be a good thing.

C. Arguments

Part A: Discuss the problems associated with consumerism.

1. Consumerism may cause overspending that in turn brings about financial problems and affects an individual's mental well-being.

- Consumerism encourages purchasing and consumption of goods and services in excess of what people need and at the expense of things like saving and investing. Pursuit of a materialistic lifestyle may hence result in people living beyond their means, incurring punitive levels of debt and working longer hours to pay for their high-consumption lifestyle. This results in them spending less time with family, friends, and community organisations.
- According to a study in the peer-reviewed monthly journal *Psychological Science* in 2012, people who are saddled with debts because of over-spending are also likely to suffer from depression.

2. Environmentalists are also concerned about the detrimental impact rising consumerism has on the planet.

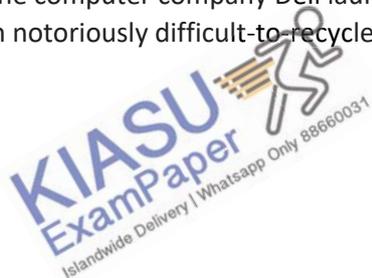
- Higher levels of consumption (and therefore higher levels of production) require larger inputs of energy and material and generate larger quantities of waste by products. Increased extraction and exploitation of natural resources, accumulation of waste and concentration of pollutants can also damage the environment.
- A new study published in the *Journal of Industrial Ecology* shows that the things we consume — from food to knick-knacks — is responsible for up to 60 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and between 50 and 80 percent of total land, material, and water use.
- As people continue to demand for more and more material possession, producers will need to use extensive amounts of water, energy, chemicals and raw materials, all of which place heavy demands on Earth's physical environment.

Part B: Explain why the concerns in part A are no longer as significant/serious.

1. The concerns that many people have about consumerism having a detrimental impact on the environment may not be as serious as what many environmentalists claim. **With access to new media, consumers today are increasingly more aware of the impact that indiscriminate consumerism has on the environment and are advocating more responsible consumerism.**
 - Such movements are advocating for the production, promotion, and preferential consumption of goods and services on the basis of their pro-environment claims. Such movements have also led to an increase in recycling, purchasing, and use of eco-friendly products that diminish harm to the environment or planet.
 - In Singapore, an online platform Swapaholic is helping women to shop without hurting your wallet or the planet by organising swap meets events held at Marina Barrage, The Capella Sentosa and Chijmes in Singapore.
 - According to Dr Faizal bin Yahya of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy recycling as a culture is clearly catching up and more secondhand goods are being sold in the market and there is also a trend towards renting rather than buying.

Part C: Discuss how consumerism may actually be a good thing.

1. **Companies, in trying to woo consumers, are making an effort to be socially and environmentally responsible.**
 - As marketing continues to evolve and get more complex and competitive, companies, in trying to attract more customers, are using honesty and realism to stand out from the competition. In addition to providing a competitive advantage, focusing on honesty helps build deeper connections with consumers. And when a company promotes a promise and delivers on it, it is seen as reliable and credible improving its image and ensuring consumers remain loyal to its brand.
 - Furthermore, in response to consumers shifting preferences towards firms that are more attentive to environmental issues, businesses nowadays are also embarking on ways to decrease their carbon footprint and the destruction of the natural environment. As more and more internationally known companies go green, the idea of going green becomes that much more tantalizing.
 - Examples: Global giant Johnson & Johnson continues to seek out renewable energy options with the goal to procure 35% of their energy needs from renewable sources. Lego will invest \$150 million over the next 15 years with a focus on addressing climate change and reducing waste. The computer company Dell launched a recycling programme that enables customers to return notoriously difficult-to-recycle electronics for free.



12) To what extent is the use of social media by politicians a positive development?

- *Note: The question says 'To what extent is ... positive?'*
- *The assumption, therefore, is that the use of social media by politicians is generally beneficial/something to be welcomed.*

Approach

Part A: Address the assumption that the use of social media by politicians is a positive development for various stakeholders – politicians and their parties, society/electorate, the democratic process (and any other relevant stakeholders)

Part B: Limitations of the perceived positive developments/Overstatement of positive impact

Part A: The benefits of the use of social media by politicians

- The use of social media has enabled politicians to **communicate more effectively with voters to expand their reach and boost voting numbers.**
 - In today's world, media organisations often have their own agendas and prejudices and politicians cannot expect objectivity or reasonable coverage. However, social media has enabled politicians to have more direct access to the voters. They are thus able to communicate their positions on issues to the electorate without needing the media as their vehicle for dissemination and **avoid being misrepresented** by them i.e. they have **better control** over what is communicated and how it is presented rather than what the media understands, interprets and articulates.
 - When the people hear directly from the politicians, they are likely to have a **better understanding** of the policies and their representatives' position. This might translate into **more informed choices** when they go to the polls.
 - Moreover, not everyone is able to attend a political rally because of the constraints of time and distance, but **politicians can access everyone** who has an internet connection, including those in remote areas or in a different time zone. Not only does social media engagement enable politicians to **widen their sphere of political influence and gain a higher percentage of the votes**, it might also **boost overall voter turnout** which is key to a truly representative democracy.
 - *E.g. The use of social media was considered to be a key factor contributing to Obama winning the election. Using social media expanded his reach increasing voters and strengthened pre-existing audience. Trump's victory is likewise attributed to the clever use of social media.*
- The use of social media by politicians enables them to **receive authentic, instantaneous public feedback** which can help them to **craft more effective policies or clarify the concerns of the people.**
 - Social media has created a **two-way conversation between politicians and electorate** that is necessary for a healthy functioning democracy. Through online discussions, citizens are better able to exercise their freedom of speech and raise pertinent concerns. The ease of expressing their views from the comfort of their homes and the fact that they see others

holding similar or conflicting views may **encourage more people to participate in political debates**. Authentic responses enable politicians to **better gauge how people are reacting to a given issue** without resorting to costly polls and surveys. They could then **clarify concerns/misconceptions, modify or propose new policies based on the public's feedback**. Such interactions enable politicians to build and maintain support amongst their voters.

- E.g. PM Lee Hsien Loong has conducted live Facebook chats where he clarified questions on government policies such as those on the use of the Central Provident Fund (CPF), healthcare costs, housing for singles and bilingualism in the education system.

Part B: Limitations of the perceived positive developments/Overstatement of positive impact

- Increased reach notwithstanding, the **views of these online users may not be an accurate reflection of the views/needs of the majority**.
 - The use of social media by politicians has indeed enabled better engagement with a social media savvy segment of the electorate but **not everyone is interested in or knows how to work social media** (the poor/elderly/lowly educated).
 - Moreover, the **most vociferous voices online are often people with vested interests**. It is thus questionable if the concerns/opinions raised in these “conversations” with politicians are **truly representative of real problems faced/position adopted by the rest of the population** and if policies would truly benefit society as a whole if they were informed by these views.

E.g. Today's Democratic Party is increasingly perceived as dominated by its “woke” left wing. But the more extreme views of Democrats on social media often bear little resemblance to those of the wider Democratic electorate. Although Democratic Virginian Governor Ralph Northam was pummeled on social media by online Democrats after a scandal, the majority of ordinary Democrats in Virginia said Mr. Northam should remain in office.

The outspoken group of Democratic-leaning voters on social media is outnumbered, roughly 2 to 1, by the more moderate, more diverse and less educated group of Democrats who typically don't post political content online, according to data from the Hidden Tribes Project. This latter group has the numbers to decide the Democratic presidential nomination in favor of a relatively moderate establishment favorite, as it has often done in the past.

- **Politicians may exploit social media for their own political advantage.**
 - Politicians are able to **employ professionals to monitor trends and manipulate information** so that it's more palatable to their supporters. They can employ staff who will **plug particular issues** and keep them in the forefront of public consciousness and to **play up the importance of their political agendas**. Politicians can even influence the direction and content of online debate themselves by **spreading untruths, manipulating voter anxiety and cherry-picking information for their own agenda**.

- When people obtain much of their information from social media, they might accept, without reflection, what they read as the truth or is considered important, especially if provided by an authority figure/representative of the government. **Real issues may be obscured** as the spread of lies by politicians **affects the people's ability to think critically and independently**. This is why interpretation of issues or events by more knowledgeable media institutions may actually help the electorate to see what the politicians seek to hide.
- E.g. *The former UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, shared a doctored image on Twitter to meet his anti-immigrant agenda. In the U.S., Trump recently retweeted a video pushing a conspiracy theory that the Clintons had somehow managed to murder the convicted sex criminal, Jeffrey Epstein, in jail to further discredit his former Presidential opponent.*
- When politicians fail to exercise due caution in their use of social media, this may serve to create **confusion over policies instead of clarifying the government's stand on key issues**.
 - Politicians who have sent out **unfiltered tweets or Facebook posts** have landed up in embarrassing situations where they have had to backpedal on comments made online. As a result, the people end up receiving **mixed signals on the government's stand**.
 - It is particularly problematic when such irresponsible and thoughtless comments are made on crucial issues like foreign policy where politicians share **opinions that do not align with national goals and end up undermining the credibility of the government**. Hence, the benefits of direct interaction between politicians and the people may be overstated.
 - E.g. *Trump's Twitter declaration to withdraw American troops from Syria created shockwaves around the world that saw top officials within the administration trying desperately to manage the fallout. The abrupt declaration prompted then-Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to resign and his Republican colleagues to decry the move as "disastrous to our national security". Amidst the confusion, Trump started to backpedal on his comments and sent officials to the Middle East to calm nerves. Till today, there is no complete withdrawal of American troops from Syria.*



1. What is the writer suggesting when he uses “thus far” in line 1? [1]

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One of the more memorable statements of Barack Obama’s presidency thus far has been his claim	<p>The writer is suggesting that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barack Obama <u>may/will/has potential to</u> make <u>more/other</u> memorable statements (<i>context: memorable statements</i>) later on in his presidency. OR This is <u>not the only</u> memorable statement Obama <u>may/will</u> make.

2. By pointing out that Adam Smith is a “seemingly unlikely ally” in line 4, what is the writer implying about Barack Obama’s belief? [2]

	☺
In making his case Obama appealed to the authority of a seemingly unlikely ally : Adam Smith, the purported founding father of laissez-faire capitalism, who is widely thought to have advocated unbridled greed and selfishness in the name of allowing the invisible hand of the market to work its magic.	<p>a. <u>Contrary to popular belief</u>, Obama shares the same belief as Adam Smith’s OR It <u>appears</u> that Barack Obama and Adam Smith hold opposing views, but they are <u>actually</u> of the same opinion OR The writer is implying that Barack Obama <u>actually/in reality/unexpectedly/surprisingly</u> shares the same belief as Adam Smith’s [1]</p> <p>b. that is he is <u>a non-believer/non-supporter/critic</u> of laissez-faire capitalism. [1]</p>

3. Explain in your own words as far as possible what the writer means by “this view of Smith is a gross caricature” (line 8). [3]

	☺
In making his case Obama appealed to the authority of a seemingly unlikely ally: Adam Smith, the purported founding father of laissez-faire capitalism , who is widely thought to have advocated unbridled greed and selfishness in the name of allowing the invisible hand of the market to work its magic... Many a scholar has made a career, in recent decades, by pointing out	<p>a. The writer means that the perception of Smith as the founding father/ the one who conceived of laissez-faire capitalism (<i>context</i>) is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>highly/extremely/greatly/very inaccurate/distorted</u> [1] OR <u>‘wrong/false/incorrect/erroneous/misconception/misrepresentation/mistake’</u>

that this view of Smith is a gross caricature.	
It has often been noted, for instance, that Smith never once used the term “laissez-faire” or even the term “capitalism,”	b. The view is a gross caricature because... 1. Smith never mentioned the terms ‘laissez-faire’ and ‘capitalism’,
and that his two books—The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) and The Wealth of Nations (1776)—are full of passages lamenting the potential moral, social, and political ills of what he called “commercial society.”	2. and he was <u>critical</u> of laissez-faire capitalism/a commercial society in his books for the possible problems it may bring to society OR he complained that laissez-faire capitalism/a commercial society would bring a lot of <u>problems</u> . [1]

4. In your own words as far as possible, explain why Smith is believed to be less concerned about economic inequality than poverty (line 14). [2]

	☺
As long as everyone has <u>food on their tables, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads</u> , the thinking goes, <u>it does not matter if some have far more than others.</u>	a) Smith is believed to think that <u>even though some are less well off than others, the poor still have access to sufficient necessities/fulfil their needs.</u> [1] OR <u>As long as everyone has enough basic necessities/have their basic needs met</u> , it is fine. Smith was more worried about those without the basic necessities.
Indeed, it is often claimed that Smith saw economic inequality as a <u>good</u> thing.	b) and that economic inequality is <u>advantageous/beneficial desirable/ a boon</u> . [1]

5. Using material from paragraphs 4-7, summarise what the writer has to say about the benefits and problems with economic inequality.

A benefit of economic inequality is that ...

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1	the great wealth of the few generally benefits the rest of society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The immense riches of some/a minority usually/normally are a boon to/favourable to/advantage/aid/help the others/everyone else/the majority in the country <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the others in the country usually gain from the immense riches of some
2	at least in material terms	tangibly OR economically/financially/in monetary terms/in terms of standard of living
3	and over the long run .	and in the long term/over an extended period of time
4	In some cases, their luxuries trickle down in an almost literal sense: <i>"The houses, the furniture, the clothing of the rich, in a little time, become useful to the inferior and middling ranks of people,"</i> Smith writes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their possessions (inferred) are passed down/given (inferred) to the poor and middle class/the lower socio-economic strata/those lower down on the social ladder.
5	the conspicuous consumption of the rich encourages productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The heavy/ huge/high/excessive/unlimited (inferred) spending/buying/demand of the wealthy brings about efficiency/higher output OR makes people work harder/faster
6	and provides employment for many	and creates jobs for the masses/a lot of people/the country/society
7	it inhibits economic growth ,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inequality stops/ halts/ hinders/impedes/obstructs/limits/restricts OR slows/weakens economic prosperity/development/progress/expansion <p>Alternative: causes an economic downturn/recession</p>
8	prevents social mobility ,	stops the movement up the social ladder/hinders people from achieving a higher socioeconomic status,

		<p>Alternative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>traps people in poverty/does not allow the poor to pursue a better life</u> ● <u>reduces the ease of climbing the social ladder</u> OR <u>makes it more difficult to improve one's socio-economic status</u> ● <u>leads to fewer people advancing to a higher social class/achieving a higher socio-economic status</u>
9	<u>impairs</u> democracy,	<u>weakens</u> democracy OR makes democracy <u>less than functional/ineffective</u>
10	or <u>runs afoul of</u> some standard of <u>fairness</u> .	<u>Is unequal/unjust/biased/partial</u> OR <u>lacks equity</u> OR <u>violates/flouts/breaks/goes against the rules of impartiality/equality.</u>
11	economic inequality <u>distorts</u> people's "sympathies"	It also <u>warps</u> people's <u>sympathies</u> or makes people cultivate <u>questionable sympathies</u> OR It leads to the people <u>feeling for/identifying with/relating to the affluent not/rather than/more than the impoverished</u>
12	leading them to <u>admire</u>	causing them to <u>respect/think highly of/ look up to/hold in high regard/adore/idolise/worship</u>
13	and <u>emulate</u> the very rich	and <u>imitate/model after/follow in the footsteps of/become like</u> the ultra-wealthy
14	and to <u>neglect</u>	while <u>ignoring/paying no attention to/not caring about/showing no concern for/disregarding/overlooking</u> OR <u>being unconcerned about/apathetic to/indifferent</u>
15	and even <u>scorn the poor</u> .	● and even <u>showing contempt/treating with disdain/mocking/ridiculing/looking down</u>

		<p><u>on/despise/disrespecting/belittling/being condescending to</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>the impoverished/destitute/needy/disadvantaged/less privileged/less fortunate.</u>
16	<p>It <u>undermines</u> both <u>morality</u> and happiness. First, morality. Smith saw the widespread admiration of the rich as morally problematic because he did not believe that the rich in fact tend to be terribly <u>admirable</u> people. In Smith’s view, the reason why the rich generally do not behave admirably is, ironically, that they are widely admired anyway (on account of their wealth)... ... Thus, it is precisely the presence of economic inequality, and the distortion of people’s sympathies that attends it, that allows—perhaps even encourages—the rich to <u>spurn the most basic standards of moral conduct</u>. Smith goes so far as to proclaim that the disposition to admire the rich and scorn the poor is the greatest cause of <u>moral corruption</u>.</p>	<p>This in turn makes the wealthy act <u>unethically/unscrupulously/dishonourably/</u> OR ... makes the wealthy <u>lose their sense of righteousness/violate ethical principles/not uphold values/have a bad conduct or character</u> OR As a result, the wealthy do not act respectably/in a principled manner</p>
17	<p>In Smith’s view, the reason why the rich generally do not behave admirably is, ironically, that they are widely admired anyway (on account of their wealth). In other words, the rich are not somehow innately vicious people.</p>	<p>They do not NEED TO act <u>ethically</u> in order to <u>win the respect/veneration of/be looked up to /be held in high regard by society</u>. OR ... they will still have the respect of others regardless/no matter what (<i>‘they do not have to act ethically’ is implied by ‘regardless/no matter what’</i>) OR</p>

	Rather, their affluence puts them in a position in which they do not have to behave morally in order to earn the esteem of others ,	... they will still have the respect of others even if they do not act ethically OR ... they (think they) CAN act however they want as people will still respect them
18	most of whom are dazzled and enchanted by their riches .	because society is blinded by/charmed by/beguiled by/captivated by their wealth /mesmerised by/overawed/spellbound by their wealth OR adores/idolises/worships/is enamoured with the wealthy
19	Smith also believed that the tendency to sympathise with the rich more easily than the poor makes people less happy ,	It also makes people less blissful/contented/satisfied/joyful . OR ... makes people miserable/sad/depressed
20	and insisted that money cannot buy happiness	Affluence/riches/wealth does not make one blissful/contented/satisfied/joyful .
21	but also that the pursuit of riches generally detracts from one's happiness .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chasing after/Seeking wealth • diminishes/lowers/reduces • one's level of bliss/contentment/satisfaction/joy,
22	Happiness consists largely of tranquillity (a lack of discord), and there is little tranquillity to be found in a life of toiling and striving to keep up with the Joneses.	as it leads to inner/internal turmoil/chaos OR hardly any peace/calm in one's life OR emotional instability

1-2 points: 1m; 3-4 points: 2m; 5-6 points: 3m; 7-8 points: 4m;
9-10 points: 5m; 11-12 points: 6m; 13-14 points: 7m; 15+ points: 8m

6. What does "goes so far" imply about the writer's view of Smith's proclamation in line 45 [1]

	😊
Smith goes so far as to proclaim that the disposition to admire the rich and scorn the poor is the	The writer thinks that Smith's proclamation that the tendency to look up to the rich and look down on the poor is the main reason for moral decay is radical/extreme/far-fetched/exaggerated/too much . OR

greatest cause of moral corruption.	... Smith went overboard with his proclamation... OR The writer does not really/fully agree with/is sceptical of/is doubtful about/is unconvinced by Smith’s proclamation...
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7. In your own words as far as possible, explain why “the vast majority of people spend the vast majority of their lives longing for and pursuing wealth.” (lines 52-53) [2]

	☺
Smith saw it as obvious that people do not work so hard in order to obtain food, clothing, and shelter but because of the <u>attention</u> it brings them: “It is the <u>vanity</u> , not the ease, or the pleasure, which interests us.”	<p>VANITY</p> <p>a. They want the people’s <u>admiration/respect/validation/acceptance/recognition</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p>They <u>want to look good in front of others/want to impress others/do it for the glamour/want to be glorified by others</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p>They do it for <u>fame/popularity/the glamour</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p>They do it <u>to feel good about themselves or for their pride/ego/self-worth/self-esteem</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p>ATTENTION</p> <p>They want to <u>be noticed/be in the limelight/be in the spotlight/attract people’s gaze/others to focus on them/widely discussed</u></p>
In other words, it is the fact that people <u>sympathise more easily with the rich</u> that leads them to want to become rich themselves,	b. as people <u>empathise with/place themselves in the shoes of/ relates to/identify with the affluent more/rather than with the impoverished</u>
and to (wrongly) assume that the rich must be <u>supremely happy</u> .	<p>c. They think wealth brings <u>immense bliss/contentment/satisfaction/joy</u>.</p> <p><i>1-2 points: 1m; 3 points: 2m</i></p>

8. Explain the use of brackets around the word “wrongly” in line 56. [1]

	☺
and to wrongly assume that the	<p>[FUNCTION] The writer is <u>interjecting his opinion</u></p> <p>[CONTEXT]</p>

<p>rich must be supremely happy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the assumption/belief/perception the affluent are very blissful/contented/satisfied OR money can buy immense joy • is fallacious/false/incorrect/erroneous OR that the affluent are not necessarily/always extremely happy. <p>Alternative phrasing of the above answer: [FUNCTION] The writer is <u>showing his disagreement with/disapproval</u> of a popular belief</p> <p>[CONTEXT]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the rich are very blissful/contented/satisfied OR money can buy immense joy <p>Alternative answer: [FUNCTION] The writer is <u>showing a contrast</u></p> <p>[CONTEXT]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between the perception that the rich are very blissful/contented/satisfied or that money can buy immense joy • and the reality that they may not be or that it may not.
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9. According to the writer, “much of Smith’s analysis rings true today” (line 58). How does the paragraph support Smith’s analysis? Use your own words as far as possible. [3]

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<p>The amount of media coverage of the lives and lifestyles of the rich and famous should suffice to confirm that even if people in today’s commercial societies do not always admire the wealthy, they do generally sympathise with them in Smith’s sense of the term—that is, people tend to put themselves in the wealthy’s shoes—far more than they do with other people.</p>	<p>The paragraph supports Smith’s analysis on people’s sympathies with rich rather than the poor by citing</p> <p>a) The <u>extensive/frequent</u> (inferred) media/press reporting or news of how the wealthy live, [1]</p>

<p>Further, even if people do not always admire the wealthy either as individuals or as a group, there is little question that they are disposed to admire and pursue wealth itself with every bit of the fervour and doggedness that Smith expected.</p>	<p>b) people's <u>inclination/willingness to worship and accumulate wealth passionately and determinedly</u> [1]</p>
<p>Finally, the other half of the distortion of people's sympathies that he describes—the tendency to unduly ignore the poor—is very much still present.</p>	<p>c) while <u>paying no attention to/not caring about/showing no concern for/neglecting/disregarding/overlooking</u> OR <u>being unconcerned about/apathetic to/indifferent to</u> the impoverished [1]</p>

10. In your own words as far as possible, explain the contradiction in the last sentence of the passage. [2]

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<p>Adam Smith, the purported founding father of laissez-faire capitalism, who is widely thought to have advocated unbridled greed and selfishness in the name of allowing the invisible hand of the market to work its magic.</p> <p>It is perhaps predictable that history's most famous theorist of commercial society would have something to add to contemporary debates about economic inequality.</p>	<p>a. [REASON] Given that he is believed to have <u>conceived/proposed</u> the concept of laissez-faire capitalism/a commercial society, <u>the cause of economic inequality</u>, [1]</p>
<p>Given his reputation, however, it is striking that Smith had more profound and original things to say in</p>	<p>b. [EXPECTED OUTCOME] Smith was <u>assumed/expected/supposed/thought to advocate/argue in favour of/support</u> inequality</p> <p>[REALITY] But he was <u>actually critical/disapproving</u> of it.</p>

<p><u>opposition</u> to inequality than in its <u>defence</u>.</p>	
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