

GENERAL PAPER SAMPLE ESSAY PROMPTS

Section 1: Historical, social, economic, political and philosophical topics

1. To what extent are small businesses in your country still affected by the recent financial upheavals?
2. How effective are the police in tackling crime where you live?
3. How important is the buying power of the over-60s to your country's economy?
4. 'Social security and welfare payments are essential in any modern society.' How far do you agree?
5. 'There are few remaining sports where players abide strictly by the rules.' How far do you agree?
6. How far has confidence in financial institutions been undermined in your country since 2008?
7. How much importance should governments place on raising consumer awareness?
8. How important is the buying power of the under-21s to your country's economy?
9. 'Tyranny is always better organised than freedom.' How far would you agree?
10. 'It is essential to maintain the integrity of sport.' Discuss this statement in the light of recent scandals in various sports.
11. How far would you agree that there is no real difference between government and opposition in most democracies?
12. 'International sporting success is not necessarily dependent on a large population.' Discuss.
13. To what extent are the elderly revered or ignored in your society?
14. How far are cultures other than European significant in your country?
15. 'Criticising your own country is important for its well-being.' How far do you agree?
16. 'High quality goods and services are only available to the privileged few.' Is this true in your opinion?
17. 'Those who don't work contribute nothing to society.' Discuss.
18. To what extent will the world benefit from the rise of China?
19. 'Memory creates myths; history records facts.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
20. 'The interests of the few, not the many, drive government policy.' How far do you agree?
21. Can expenditure on prestigious events, like the Olympic Games or a state occasion, be justified?
22. 'The state should provide financial support for families raising children.' How far do you agree?
23. 'Sport can promote social change.' In what ways is this statement true?
24. To what extent has the quality of life improved for people aged over 60 in your country?

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25. 'Governments have a duty to interfere in people's lives.' What are the arguments for and against this view?
26. How much truth is there in the old joke that 'economists have predicted ten of the last five recessions'?
27. How far would you agree that there is no real difference between government and opposition in most democracies?
28. How much importance should governments place on raising consumer awareness?
29. Evaluate the characteristics that make the people of your country unique as a nation.
30. Is it democratically acceptable not to vote in elections?
31. 'Girls and women participate less in sport than boys and men.' How far is this inevitable or desirable?
32. To what extent does your country's constitution uphold and promote human rights?
33. To what extent are racism and other forms of discrimination a problem in your society?
34. Nelson Mandela wrote 'The real heroes are men and women who are friends of the poorest of the poor.' To what extent do you agree?
35. 'As well as instructing and convincing, history should be thrilling and delightful.' How far do you agree with this proposition?
36. Have revolutions ever made the world a better place? Examine two revolutions in support of your view.
37. How effective, so far, are the measures your country has taken to counteract the global financial crises?
38. 'Anybody who ignores history is foolish.' How far would you agree?
39. To what extent would you agree that your country has the government it deserves?
40. How far should immigration be encouraged or discouraged?
41. Assess the advantages of living in an extended family.
42. How far has your country recovered from the global financial crises?
43. 'Explaining the past should be left to historians.' Discuss.
44. To what extent would you consider politicians to be dishonest?
45. How far do you believe immigration to be a blessing to your country?
46. How helpful has parental advice been in your life so far?
47. How valid is it to claim that war cannot be avoided?
48. 'Superpowers do more harm than good in the world.' How far do you agree?

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49. Should there be any limits to freedom of expression?
50. Can child labour ever be justified?
51. 'A society suffers if it fails to educate its women.' How far do you share this view?
52. How justified are the high salaries and bonuses paid out in some professions?
53. To what extent should a nation try to forget its past?
54. Should women be more prominent in the public life of your country?
55. 'Elections are meaningless as many voters have no real knowledge of national and international issues.' Discuss.
56. How far do you agree that an hereditary monarch as Head of State is preferable to an elected President?
57. To what extent is there equality of opportunity in your country?
58. To what extent are economic migrants a problem for their host countries?
59. Assess the influence of globalisation on the family unit in your society.
60. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of democracy?
61. How far would you agree that written history is as much fiction as fact?
62. To what extent was your country affected by the recent global financial crises?
63. How far has eco-tourism been developed in your country?
64. How far would you agree with the accusation that religion is the 'opium of the people'?
65. 'Civilisation is essentially an attitude of equal respect for all people.' Discuss.
66. Can democracy be imposed or must it grow naturally?
67. Explain the main causes, in your opinion, of the recent global financial crises.
68. Discuss the significance of tourism for your country.
69. 'Faith consists in believing what is beyond the power of reason to believe.' How far would you agree?
70. The break-up of the Soviet Union has ended the socialist dream. To what extent is this true?
71. 'For the sake of efficiency, public transport should be privately owned.' Do you agree?
72. How successfully is crime tackled in your society?
73. How justifiable is it for the international community to impose sanctions on 'rogue' states?

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74. To what extent is climate change a bigger global threat than terrorism?
75. 'Meaningful social interaction can only be achieved face-to-face.' How far do you agree?
76. 'The high salaries of top sports personalities are unjustified.' To what extent do you agree?
77. To what extent should limits be placed upon the state's surveillance of its citizens?
78. 'Children do not achieve their potential in education.' How far do you agree with this claim?
79. In a world that has become smaller through exploration and communication, assess the challenges that are left for the adventurous.
80. If you could go backwards in time, which historical period would you most like to visit? Explain why this period appeals to you.
81. How important is protest in the democratic process?
82. Assess the value of countries joining together to form alliances or communities.
83. 'Family and tradition are more important than the rights of the individual.' Discuss.
84. To what extent do you agree that 'children should be allowed to get bored'?
85. 'House work and child care are women's work.' How far do you agree?
86. Choose a famous person from the past and consider how that person would be viewed in today's world.
87. Discuss some of the causes of human trafficking and suggest ways in which this practice can be effectively defeated.
88. To what extent can 'whistle-blowing' (the revealing of state or business secrets by an individual) be justifiable?
89. Assess the ideal circumstances for a child to grow up in.
90. In order to cut crime and re-offending, consider measures that would prove effective in your society.
91. Have there ever been successful revolutions in ideas or political systems?
92. 'The skilled worker deserves as much recognition in society as the academically educated.' How far do you agree?
93. To what extent is the safety of foreign tourists the responsibility of the country they are visiting?
94. Assess the reasons for unemployment in your country.
95. To what extent have political decisions improved the lives of people in your country?
96. Examine whether manners and courtesy have any value in today's society.
97. How important is the father's role in the modern family?

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98. To what extent are justice and security for women respected in your country or region?
99. Equality of opportunity is the most important feature of a civilised society.' How far do you agree?
100. 'Powerful nations are far more inward looking than weaker ones.' How far do you agree?
101. To what extent does migration from other countries benefit **your** country's economy?
102. How far is water of more economic and political value than oil?
103. To what extent can distance learning replace the experience of a traditional classroom?
104. 'Being a workaholic is always dangerous.' How far is this true?
105. Assess the discrimination you might face when choosing a career, considering such issues as age, sex, and background.
106. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. To what extent is slavery still a problem in the 21st Century?
107. Evaluate the characteristics that make the people of **your** country unique as a nation.
108. Is it democratically acceptable **not** to vote in elections?
109. 'Girls and women participate less in sport than boys and men.' How far is this inevitable or desirable?

Section 2: Science, including its history, philosophy general principles and application; environmental issues; mathematical topics

1. Assess the benefits and drawbacks of cosmetic surgery.
2. To what extent is your country experiencing substantial climate change?
3. How far should the state interfere with an individual's right to smoke and drink alcohol?
4. To what extent can an individual in a developed country function effectively without the internet?
5. 'Organic farming can never solve the world's food problems.' Discuss.
6. 'No limits whatsoever should be placed on medical research.' Discuss.
7. How efficient is the transport infrastructure in your country?
8. How far have scientific developments removed our sense of awe and mystery?
9. Consider how far web services such as Twitter and Facebook are a force for harmony or discord.
10. What do you understand by 'sustainable development'? How far has it progressed in your region?

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11. 'Our demand for energy justifies drilling anywhere.' Consider this claim.
12. To what extent would you agree with Al Gore that 'the science is settled' with regard to global warming?
13. 'Modern society is too reliant on "pill-popping".' Assess this opinion.
14. To what extent do you consider the increasing popularity of internet-based friendships and relationships to be desirable?
15. How far is tourism in Space viable?
16. 'Modern technology imprisons the human spirit.' How much truth is there in this view?
17. Some people would argue that those who smoke, drink alcohol or are obese should not have priority medical treatment. What is your view?
18. 'Travel broadens the mind.' How far is this true?
19. Assess the usefulness of statistics in people's lives.
20. Does it matter that insects such as bees might be in danger of extinction?
21. 'Water is too precious to be treated as a commodity.' How far do you agree?
22. 'The intensive rearing of animals for meat production worsens the world's food problems and harms the environment.' Discuss.
23. 'Sophisticated technology does not make us more secure.' How true is this?
24. How far is it true to say that the Internet is a musician's best friend and worst enemy?
25. Genetically modified crops have been grown since the early 1990s and now account for 10% of the world's cultivated land. Should GM crops still give us cause for concern?
26. People often overlook the benefits of exploring their own country when deciding on a holiday destination. Compare the benefits of holidaying in your own country with holidaying abroad.
27. Despite the progress made in science, people are still interested in the supernatural. Why is this so?
28. Consider the view that the computer has failed to meet our educational needs in school.
29. 'Social networks, like Facebook, have radically changed our attitude to personal privacy.' Consider this statement.
30. 'Without animal research and testing, medical advances would be seriously delayed.' How far do you agree?
31. 'Global warming is a far greater threat to our planet than international terrorism.' Evaluate the truth of this observation.
32. Given the misery in both human and personal history, is it possible to believe in compassionate Divinity?

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33. How far is it true that the Earth's geology subjects our civilisations to dramatic change without notice?
34. Considering the problems facing your region's agriculture, how effective are farm and land management in coping with these difficulties?
35. 'Mathematics can reveal the beauty and order of the world.' How is your understanding of the world enhanced by mathematics?
36. 'Human migration is solely determined by economic considerations.' How far do you agree?
37. How far is it the duty of couples to limit the number of children they have?
38. Account for the strong preference for male babies in some societies.
39. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of hydroelectric power generation.
40. How effectively engaged are young people in environmentally friendly projects in your region?
41. Account for the popularity of console and computer games.
42. 'Personal income should be sufficient to cover decent shelter, clothing and food.' How well are these 'basics' fulfilled in your society?
43. 'Parents should not be allowed to select their child's gender.' To what extent would you agree?
44. Assess the suitability of solar power for generating sufficient electricity.
45. To what extent should young people worry about climate change and global warming?
46. How much of a social problem is internet gambling?
47. To what extent has your country protected itself against recent pandemics?
48. Assess the ability of technology to ensure human happiness in the present century.
49. How far is mathematics 'the true universal language'?
50. 'In order to progress we need to be in harmony with nature.' How true is this claim?
51. Is it really important to respect even the most insignificant of species?
52. 'Fears about global warming are often exaggerated and alarmist.' Do you have any sympathy with this view?
53. How true is it that most of the pleasurable things in life are bad for you?
54. Should obesity be regarded as a serious health concern?
55. Is the theory of evolution nothing more than a theory? Defend your view on this topic.
56. How far is it true to claim that pesticides have done more harm than good?

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57. To what extent is it correct to claim that modern technology enables businesses to be located anywhere?
58. How far does scientific knowledge undermine religious beliefs?
59. What are the main environmental problems in your part of the world, and how effectively are they being tackled?
60. Of all the advances and discoveries in medicine in the last fifty years, which two do you consider will prove to be of greatest significance in the twenty-first century and why?
61. To what degree is access to the internet absolutely necessary in the modern world?
62. How important is fresh water as a global commodity?
63. How effective are diets in helping people to lose weight and become fit?
64. To what extent should developing countries be expected to limit their industrial output to suit current environmental concerns?
65. Which mathematicians do you consider have greatly influenced the modern world? Justify your choices.
66. Today, news can be transmitted by anybody with access to technology. Assess the implications of this change.
67. To what extent can the impact of natural disasters be lessened?
68. How far would you agree that we should 'eat to live' and not 'live to eat'?
69. 'Population growth is the primary source of environmental damage.' Is this the whole truth?
70. How far would you agree that mathematics is the real universal language?
71. To what extent does video conferencing make international travel unnecessary?
72. How valuable is the knowledge being gained from observatories and space telescopes?
73. How effective is the conservation of plants and animals in your region?
74. Account for the ever-increasing popularity of number and word puzzles.
75. How feasible is human settlement on other planets?
76. 'It is more important to learn and understand the practical applications of science than the theories.' How far do you agree?
77. To what extent is there likely to be an important future for electrically powered cars?
78. To what extent do our genes determine our future?
79. We should all eat less meat. How far is this true?
80. How reliable are statistics measuring aspects of health, crime and employment?

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81. Parks, gardens and open spaces enhance city living. To what extent are features like these important?
82. 'The internet has done more harm than good to the entertainment industry.' How far do you agree?
83. 'Of all renewable energies, solar power has emerged as the most popular.' To what extent is this true?
84. How far would you agree that 'learning mathematics is like learning a foreign language'?
85. To what extent should your country monitor and screen the health of young people?
86. Assess the ways that robotic technology might feature in different areas of our lives in the twenty-first century.
87. 'Although this is the age of the internet, ignorance of others and their lifestyles is as common now as it ever was.' Discuss.
88. 'Using less energy is a solution to the world's energy crisis.' How far do you agree?
89. Thirty years ago childhood obesity was rare, whereas today it is common in many areas of the world. How can this problem be reduced?
90. Evaluate the dangers and advantages of internet blogging sites such as the social network 'Twitter'.
91. Consider the view that 'conservation of wilderness and wildlife should be the priority of all nations'.
92. 'A country's energy development should be restricted to its own natural resources.' How realistic is this opinion?
93. To what extent is the saying 'a healthy body means a healthy mind' as true as it seems?
94. Consider the effectiveness of the land use and farming techniques of your country in meeting its future needs.
95. 'The educational potential of the internet is greater than any danger it may pose to younger users.' Discuss.
96. Evaluate the importance of mathematics and engineering in art and design.
97. There are circumstances in which curiosity might endanger scientific progress.' Discuss.
98. To what extent do modern communications isolate us, rather than connect us, to others?
99. Evaluate the possible advantages of apprenticeships and training in the work place over school and college courses.
100. 'Sugar is the new tobacco.' Consider the relevance of this statement.
101. Research using animals has reached an all-time high. How far is this ethical?
102. 'In developing countries, public health education should have a higher priority than the provision of medicines.' Discuss.
103. 'Construction requiring traditional materials is a thing of the past.' How substantial is this claim?
104. Should searching for intelligent extra-terrestrial life be considered important?

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105. How far is it possible for traditional stories of creation to co-exist with science?

Section 3: Literature and language, arts and crafts

1. 'Too many video games promote aggression and violence.' How far do you agree?
2. As long as we communicate, does it matter if we are grammatically inaccurate?
3. 'It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.' How far would you agree with this view?
4. How well are the arts, for example, drama, music and painting, promoted and supported where you live?
5. Which novels have you least enjoyed studying at school? Give reasons for your choices.
6. 'Modern toys fail to stimulate a child's creativity and imagination.' In your experience, how far is this true?
7. Which foreign country would you most like to visit? Give reasons for your choice.
8. 'The media pays far too much attention to people who do not deserve it.' How far do you agree?
9. 'Modern buildings are ugly; historic buildings are beautiful.' To what extent would you agree?
10. Which foreign culture appeals most to you? Give reasons for your choice.
11. Great writers explore ideas of universal significance.' Show how this applies to a writer or writers from your region.
12. 'Language is constantly changing.' Should we be concerned about this?
13. 'There is no beauty in modern art.' Discuss with reference to specific examples.
14. Many people are dedicated followers of fashion. How far are health and happiness dependent on image?
15. To what extent is the phenomenon of celebrity modern?
16. 'If English is the language of education and business, we are one happy family, no matter how far apart countries are.' How far do you agree?
17. Writers, like Dickens, draw our attention to injustice happening before our eyes. Write a commentary on any writer or writers that have stirred your conscience.
18. If you were the Culture Minister of your country, explain what your priorities would be.
19. How effectively are your nation's characteristics conveyed by any creative artist whose work you have enjoyed?
20. 'Being fashionable is more about conformity than individuality.' How far do you agree with this statement?
21. 'Radio broadcasting has no future.' To what extent do you agree?
22. Should the Arts play a role in political activism? Discuss with reference to specific examples.

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23. Recommend an autobiography, personal memoir or diary and explain why you have enjoyed reading it.
24. What kind of music do you most dislike, and what is it about this music that makes you feel as you do?
25. 'A good film should reflect real life.' To what extent do you agree?
26. What, in your view, are the most significant advantages of being proficient in more than one language?
27. Discuss the idea that reading printed books is a thing of the past.
28. How effectively does the government of your country support and encourage visual and performance arts, e.g. dance, drama, film, music?
29. 'It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.' How far would you agree with this view?
30. 'Modern toys fail to stimulate a child's creativity and imagination.' In your experience, how far is this true?
31. How far would you agree that art is 'anything you can get away with'?
32. Handwriting is often considered a relic of the past. Argue the case for retaining it.
33. In considering the languages you are familiar with, evaluate the influence they have in your society and on yourself.
34. How important is it for a country to have its own film industry?
35. Are there any aspects of fashion that you would consider timeless?
36. Consider adverts you know well and suggest reasons for their impact.
37. Photography is both skillful and creative. Explain why this is true.
38. How far, in your opinion, can communication be achieved through dance and/or drama?
39. Discuss the appeal of science fiction films.
40. What do you consider to be a 'good read', and why? Refer to at least two novels with which you are familiar.
41. Why do human beings of all ages feel the need to play?
42. To what extent has television had a negative impact on 'live' entertainment?
43. To what degree have local languages influenced spoken and/or written English in your country?
44. Would you consider your society to be too fashion conscious?
45. How far do you agree with the suggestion for paying to access content on the internet?
46. To what extent are Shakespeare's works still relevant today?

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47. Should the state subsidise such arts as opera, ballet and theatre?
48. 'The way we dress reveals who we are.' How true is this?
49. Account for the ever increasing popularity of celebrity culture.
50. To what extent is learning a foreign language important in your society?
51. 'Historic buildings are interesting but useless relics of the past.' Discuss.
52. How important is it for individual cultures to maintain their own art forms?
53. To what extent should the media lead or follow public opinion?
54. Is cooking more than just a necessity?
55. 'Without storytellers, we would understand neither ourselves nor the world about us.' How far is this true?
56. To what extent should the arts aim to awaken our political and social awareness?
57. 'A play can be read, but to be truly appreciated it must be seen.' How far do you agree with this view?
58. 'Nothing today compares with the artistic masterpieces of previous generations.' How far do you agree with this judgement?
59. 'If we all spoke the same language, the world would be a better place.' How true is this?
60. Are films or movies only for entertainment and nothing else? Illustrate your answer with appropriate examples.
61. How far do you agree that young people usually reject the music enjoyed by their elders?
62. Consider the special appeal of poetry.
63. To what extent is accurate grammar important in speech and in the written word?
64. What, in your opinion, makes a work of art worth a huge amount of money? Give reasons and examples for your choice.
65. What kind of music do you find most appealing? Give reasons and examples for your choice.
66. How effectively are traditional crafts maintained and supported in your society?
67. How far would you classify advertising as an art form?
68. Who is your favourite composer of music? Give reasons and examples for your choice.
69. Account for the ever increasing popularity of digital photography.
70. How important is it to have a good command of spoken and written English?

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71. To what extent is the appearance of a building important?
72. Explain the popularity of designer labels.
73. In what ways has the work of one artist, one musician or one writer influenced your life?
74. 'All art is useless.' How far do you agree?
75. With reference to at least two women writers, assess the importance of their writing.
76. 'A film can shape the way in which you understand the world.' How true is this of any film, or films, that you have seen?
77. 'Celebrities promoting charitable causes do more harm than good.' How far is this statement justifiable?
78. Books written specifically for children are often enjoyed by adults. Consider why this should be.
79. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of writing about yourself on the internet.
80. How far do you agree that music needs words to be of any interest?
81. 'Tourism encourages countries to maintain and preserve their historical sites and buildings.' To what extent is this true?
82. In advertising, the visual image is more important than language. Discuss.
83. Name two children's books that both provoke and educate the reader. Show how they do this.
84. Films and photography produced in black and white are becoming popular again. Account for this trend.
85. Name a sport that deserves more recognition worldwide. Give reasons for your choice.
86. To what extent is the media in your country focused on international events?
87. Account for the popularity of the superhero genre among younger age groups.
88. 'To be an effective writer you need to be influenced by what you have read.' How far do you agree?
89. Puppetry is one of the world's most ancient performing arts. How significant is this art form today?
90. 'There are no circumstances in which it is acceptable to censor the internet.' Discuss.
91. 'Watching television limits the imagination whereas listening to the radio expands it.' Discuss.
92. To what extent are foreign television programmes destroying the culture of your country?
93. Advertising revenue in traditional newspapers and magazines is declining. To what extent is this a regrettable development?
94. Assess what distinguishes a successful film from an unsuccessful one.

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95. Evaluate the importance of dance in your society or community.
96. 'Unless there is the freedom to give offence there is no freedom of expression.' How far do you agree?
97. Assess the impact of poetry on people today. Refer to specific poets.
98. Consider what makes a beautiful garden or park. Using local or other examples, state your case.
99. 'Poetry makes nothing happen.' (W H Auden). How far is this justified?
100. 'Comic books and graphic novels are aimed at a mature and intelligent readership.' To what extent is this true?
101. With reference to any books, films, TV shows and life in general, examine what you consider to be 'good comedy'.
102. Choose **two** well-known people and assess their importance in the culture of our times.