

## **2017 JC2 Prelim Answer Scheme**

### **1. ARE RULES MEANT TO BE BROKEN?**

#### **Analysis**

Students should consider a range of different rules (from regulations, protocols, laws etc) and examine the arguments for adhering to or breaking these rules from various levels - individual, family, societal or international. Students should not provide a laundry list of what types of rules are meant to be observed or meant to be broken.

#### **Clarification of Terms**

- Rules - Explicit or understood/tacit regulations or principles governing the conduct or procedure. Rules, regulations and policies necessarily exist to establish a basic framework within which an organization operates.
- Meant to be - Intended to be

#### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

##### **Yes, rules are meant to be broken**

##### **1. Rules are not universal, they are contextual**

Rules are, more often than not, generalizations, designed to apply to most people and in most situations. Rules were formed depending on a range of factors, such as history, people, processes and goals. They are not tailored to specifically meet every single unique circumstance. Therefore, blindly following rules in every situation can be instead seen as foolish and merely blind adherence. Rules are based on theories of what is best and those theories are based on the available information at the time they were created, this means that rules can often be outdated or irrelevant yet blindly followed. Especially in cases of emergencies, rules are not made to cover every single type of emergency and thus discretion should be taken in deciding if rules should be rigidly followed. These rules might also not be well constructed.

##### **2. Rules should just be seen as guidelines since they can limit potential, ability to explore and prevent us from living our lives fully or reaching greater heights**

"Rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men." – Harry Day. Rules are rigid and confine behaviour and thinking within a preconceived space. Rules are created to protect the status quo, not to spur innovation. Singapore's rigid bend toward uncompromising performance excellence also means it is less agile than other markets. It also means that, should this continue, she will always be at the mercy of international businesses and foreign talents as her workforce currently lacks the assertiveness skills, courage and grit to take helm of the innovative changes necessary to level up its economy. Excessive rules can also cause over-regulation and lower efficiency and productivity. In Singapore, Singaporeans follow rules rigidly. This causes us to have weak adaptation skills when things change and in new situations with no pre-established rules. In a way, this creates fear of the unknown and limits our ability to take advantage of new situations.

##### **3. Rules take away our right, independence and autonomy**

Every day governments pass laws to make us a safer society. As they make society safer they are slowly chewing away at people's rights, liberties, and personal freedoms. Where is the line between where our right to choose is more important than the government's right to impose their standards on us, even if it is for our own good? We now have law regulating everything. We are forced to wear seat belts. Smokers cannot smoke outside. Governments want to regulate abortion, religion, sex, child discipline, marriage, and free speech.

More devastatingly, rules remove our ability to think for ourselves when we get so accustomed to blindly following them. Recently, scientists have recreated the notorious Milgram Experiment and found that even in today's supposedly enlightened times, obedience to rules and authority could override a person's moral beliefs and use

rules as a defence for their wrongdoing. In businesses, the standard line from an employee of a rule-bound company is "hey, I'm not losing my job over this," taking away our ability to make the right choices and decisions because of our fear of breaking rules.

### **Rules are not meant to be broken**

#### **1. As they create order and stability.**

Rules, even the most seemingly objectionable ones, are meant to keep one and others safe as one is made aware of the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable actions. This ensures the effective functioning of society, for example, school rules instil discipline in students and laws of a country ensure that citizens are protected from one another. So if one goes against rules, the law can be enforced. Rules also help to protect the rights of the minority groups in society so that they are not taken advantage of and become resentful. For example, Singapore's Manpower Ministry has employment laws in place to penalise discriminatory practices related to age and gender. Under the Retirement and Re-employment Act, an employer cannot dismiss an employee on the grounds of age. Rules also ensure that people are aware of what to do in crises so that society is not thrown into chaos.

#### **2. As they can guide one's actions.**

Rules function as general guidelines for society, and were made and implemented to help reinforce what is acceptable / moral, and what is not. Written codes aid in negotiating one's way through life and helps one to do one's job better. In fact, many groups of professionals subscribe to a code of ethics that govern their actions and conduct. For example, the American Medical Association prescribes a detailed code of medical ethics stating clearly patient-doctor relationships and confidentiality issues. The teaching profession in Singapore too abides by a Code of Professional Conduct for Educators that guides teachers on their conduct and help them uphold standards amid an increasingly complex environment. In arbitration, rules are important because they help to determine which party is right or wrong and the appropriate action or punishment to be meted out to the respective parties.

#### **3. As they express the collective wisdom / shared understanding of people.**

Rules (in the broadest sense) are a distillation of the collective wisdom of a society. Passed down through the generations, these rules help people to determine and reinforce what is permissible and what is prohibited in many areas of life. By doing so, this reinforces the values, beliefs and principles that are cherished and deemed important to people. For instance, what we consume and how it is consumed (like diet and dining etiquettes) to all the major milestones in life's journey (birth, coming of age, marriage, death).

## **2. IS SINGLEHOOD STILL TO BE AVOIDED?**

### **Analysis**

It has been the traditional thinking that being single is not what humans are created to be. Procreation to ensure the continuance of one's family line is considered to be one of the most important responsibilities of being married. As such, remaining single is traditionally frowned upon, and the terms "bachelor" and "spinster" even carry negative connotations, as if there is something wrong with people who remain unmarried. They could be considered to be physically or mentally defective. Singlehood was to be avoided at all cost, less you want to be shunned or looked at with suspicion. However over time, values and family mores change, and today, being single is a matter of choice and no longer something to be simply dismissed. In fact, it is even recognised as desirable for some.

### **Clarification of Terms**

- Still - It was, or it happened. But does it prevail till today? Does it continue till today?
- To be avoided - Suggests that there is something inherently wrong with remaining single that could be harmful to both individuals and society.

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

## **Singlehood is still to be avoided**

### **1. Societal and social expectations prevail till the present time to pressure singles to get married.**

Parents with adult children live with the wish for their children to get married and start families of their own. This hope to see their children grow up, become mature and responsible adults and then settle down existed in the past, and this expectation continues to exert pressure on single children who may have plans and aspirations of their own that they want to fulfil. In Asia, such expectations are especially evident as it is a traditional and cultural belief that has been deeply entrenched over centuries in their lives. Such an expectation is translated into a sense of family duty. Such a duty is in turn attached to being filial to not only one's parents, but also the generations of ancestors before them, and single children are perceived to not have fulfilled this duty. The burden of getting married sits squarely on the shoulders of such children. As a result, single children are put through a gruelling process during family gatherings, where relatives question why they are still not married and how their parents are still waiting to have grandchildren to dote on. Singles fear times like this, and some would go out of their way to avoid relatives during festive occasions. Some live with a sense of guilt, especially for single Asian males who assume the obligation of carrying on their family lineage and therefore not fulfil their duties. In this sense, being single is to be averted due to fervent family and societal pressure to get married.

### **2. Single people continue to live with the fear of leading a lonely existence.**

Humans are social beings and families are the closest kin who see us through thick and thin. In the past when most people got married, single people often ended up leading lonely lives, with no family members to rely on. Today, even with society being more accepting of singlehood, single people continue to fear being lonely as our society becomes more individualistic. Privacy is valued to the detriment of single people as people respect the rights of others to remain single. To avoid making single people feel awkward during social gatherings, they may not be invited for such gatherings.

### **3. In an increasingly greying world, the social and economic impact of a society that consists of largely single people ought to be feared in various ways.**

In our modern world, sociologists and economists are warning about the impending negative impact of a declining birth rate, made worse by an ageing population. This is also compounded by an increasing number of single people, and it is especially prevalent in developed countries, from Singapore to Europe. A 2015 Gallup Poll revealed that a whopping 64% of respondents were single and never married, and this number showed a steady increase over the past decade. The American Bureau of Labor Statistics confirmed that there are more single Americans than married ones: in 1950, there was about 22% single people, while it is now 50.2%. Social support facilities could be strained as a result, especially when they grow old and have no one to rely on, and the burden of sustaining them falls on the government, and therefore the taxpayers, possibly disproportionately displacing the other needs of the society.

## **Singlehood is no longer to be avoided**

### **1. Modern society, which is a lot more open and accepting of differences, no longer frown on those who choose to remain single, but recognise singlehood as a lifestyle choice that ought to be respected.**

While single people could be shunned in the past due to the stereotypical views that there could be something wrong with them or they were queer, today, people are more open to them. This is because being single is perceived to be an alternative lifestyle that carries with it a right that nobody should deny. Just as there are alternative marriages and alternative sexual orientations that are a lot more public nowadays – as people accept these alternative lifestyles – singlehood is just part of this trend. Even Singaporeans, still largely conservative, are part of this trend. In the past divorcees were stigmatised, especially for divorced women who were (unfairly) perceived as used goods, and they could be ostracised socially as well. But today, being divorced is socially acceptable.

**2. With the aid of advanced technologies, elderly singles could still live a healthy existence and remain productive citizens who contribute much to the economy.**

Debilitating diseases that plagued the single elderly used to be a huge issue, especially when such ailments caused suffering, rendering the old folks totally dependent and hanging on to a meaningless existence, alone and neglected. However today, with phenomenal advances in medical technologies, such diseases have either been eliminated or the conditions are alleviated to the extent that the elderly could live a reasonably productive and quality life. Being stricken with cancer, a common dreaded disease among old folks, is not as scary as before as scientists are racing to find a cure for it, and meanwhile, when diagnosed early, cancer could be arrested. Other diseases such as coronary heart diseases, osteoporosis and stroke – which those who are growing old as singles could be prone to – could be managed well with medicine. In addition, education on ways to lead a healthier lifestyle to curtail the onslaught of old-aged diseases are freely available on social media. There are health programmes, forums and talks – on dieting and exercise – that are specially tailored for single people as they are a vulnerable group when growing old by themselves. With such a prevalent availability of health-related services, what is there to be afraid of when growing old as singles?

**3. The current trend of singlehood is one of active ageing and growing old gracefully and purposefully.**

Unlike in the past when single people were less educated and therefore had less personal aspirations. They would often just flow with what life offered them, and accept that growing old meant slowing down and becoming decrepit and reliant on families and society for provision. In a sense, they just wait, alone, for the Grim Reaper to get them. Today, there are many clubs and activities that are targeted specifically to cater to the needs of the silver tsunami. Many governments, aware that the increased older population could potentially become a financial and emotional burden to society, are taking active steps to counter this by advocating active ageing. A lot more activities are organised for the singles, ranging from outings, meals, dates, tours, etc.

**3. 'SINGAPORE FOR SINGAPOREANS.' DISCUSS.**

**Analysis**

Students need to understand and unpack the implications of the quote 'Singapore for Singaporeans' in the light of tensions and xenophobia regarding the increasing influx of foreigners and immigration issues. Students should also recognise the difficulties and challenges that Singapore faces should the needs of Singaporeans only be placed as top priority. They should also acknowledge that for our nation's success and survival, there is a need to find a balance between the two extremes.

**Clarification of Terms**

- Singapore for Singaporeans – the notion that the needs of Singaporean citizens must be placed as utmost importance. This implies that government's policies and decisions regarding various aspects of life, for example, employment and educational opportunities, should be centred around Singaporeans and not non-Singaporeans

**Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

**Singapore is for Singaporeans**

**1. As Singapore has limited resources and these resources should be given to Singaporeans.**

As a small island state, Singapore has limited resources whether in terms of infrastructure, housing, jobs or educational opportunities. With more foreigners entering Singapore, local Singaporeans feel that there is a growing strain on these resources. For example, the increasing number of foreigners over the last few years have impacted our transportation system, causing many Singaporeans to complain about the over-crowded buses and trains especially during peak hours. Also, there is a perception that non-Singaporeans pose a threat to local Singaporeans' job security as there is increasing competition for the jobs available and the foreigners are taking up opportunities and better job prospects in companies and organisations which would have previously gone to the local Singaporeans. In addition, immigration has been blamed for rising property prices and increasing costs of living. The

result is that local Singaporeans feel disadvantaged and develop a sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction. Hence it can be argued that the livelihood of Singaporeans should be placed as a priority and these job opportunities and promotions ought to be given to the locals first. For example, the Fair Consideration Framework was implemented on 1 August 2014 to alleviate perceptions that foreigners are given preferential treatment in hiring processes. Employers must now consider Singaporeans before hiring Employment Pass Holders.

## **2. As it is the responsibility of the Singapore government to take care of Singaporeans' needs.**

It is widely accepted that the government of a country is duty-bound to take care of the needs of its citizens. If the government does not take care of the people who voted it into power, then who will? As a result of concerns raised by Singaporeans regarding employment, the government revised immigration policies and implemented several measures, such as the Fair Consideration Framework which encourages employers to consider more local applicants. In addition, the Ministry of Manpower introduced stricter requirements, such as a higher minimum salary for employment pass holders and a more stringent review of the qualifications submitted by potential applicants. In terms of education, school and miscellaneous fees payable by Singapore citizens is much lower than foreign students.

## **3. As there is a need to preserve the Singaporean identity**

Foreigners bring with them their own traditions, cultural beliefs and practices and it is unsurprising that there is fear among Singaporeans that not only will local cultures and norms be infringed, the Singaporean identity would be diluted too. For example, in 2011, the dispute between a migrant family from China and a Singaporean Indian family over the smell of curry emanating from the latter's home sparked off a huge public uproar about immigrants who were critical about Singapore's cultural practices. As a result, the "Cook and Share a Pot of Curry" campaign was started by Singaporean, Florence Leow, who used Facebook to encourage Singaporeans to cook curry at home on 21 August 2011 to celebrate curries as Singaporeans' way of life.

## **Singapore is not just for Singaporeans (ie also for foreigners)**

### **1. As Singaporeans and foreigners are needed to contribute to a dynamic economy.**

Due to the decreasing birth rates and an ageing population, Singapore simply lacks the resources and manpower to ensure that our economy continues to grow. According to a report by The Straits Times in February 2017, the country's total fertility rate (TFR) in 2016 has dropped to 1.20. This is below the previous year's rate of 1.24, which is well below the 2.1 rate a population needs to achieve to replace itself. The number of working-age Singaporeans will still start to decrease from 2020 and at our current low birth rate, our citizen population will age rapidly and start declining from 2025 if we do not take in any new immigrants. The Singapore government released the Population White Paper in 2013 in a bid to increase the population to 6.9 million by 2030. For Singapore's survival in the long term, it is imperative that we continue to attract a pool of talented people from other countries that can add value to Singapore's economic growth. Skilled immigrants are beneficial to Singapore as Singapore will be able to increase her talent pool and improve the quality of labour workforce, making it industrious and highly efficient. It is also important to recognise that some foreigners are only transient workers and they do not intend to make Singapore their home and stay here for the long term. Nevertheless, foreigners in Singapore are able to pass down the skills and techniques they learned back in their host countries and contribute and share ideas with Singaporeans, upgrading the locals' expertise. Also, in the light of increasing competition from the growing economies of our neighbouring countries, our population and workforce must support a dynamic economy that can steadily create good jobs and opportunities to meet the hopes and aspirations of Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans alike.

### **2. As it is not just Singaporeans but foreigners which help to make Singapore's cultural landscape even more vibrant and colourful.**

In addition to celebrating Chinese, Indian and Malay cultures, foreigners bring in their unique cultural values, practices and traditions which help to augment the cosmopolitan nature of Singapore as a Renaissance City,

bringing us to be at the same level as other multi-cultural cities such as London, France and New York. At the International Women's Forum 20th Anniversary Dinner, Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, spoke of the importance of diversity as a source of strength. The melting pot of cultures from across the world such as French, British, Italian, Japanese and Korean add colour and liveliness, helping to promote Singapore's reputation as a global city.

### **3. As Singapore is historically a country of immigrants who came from different parts of the world**

Historically Singapore attracted immigrants from China, India, the Malay Archipelago, and beyond even from her earlier years. Singapore's very existence is built on being open to immigration and in fact, there are few Singaporeans whose forefathers were not themselves immigrants. Today there are many foreigners who come to Singapore to live, study or work both on a short term or long term basis. As of June 2016, Singapore's total population stood at 5.61 million out of which there were 3.41 million Singapore citizens, 0.52 million permanent residents and 1.67 million non-residents, including dependants, international students and foreign individuals who are here to work and live. Already Singapore cannot and should not contemplate reserving Singapore only for Singaporeans and closing our borders to foreigners and immigrants. Local Singaporeans have also written in to the press to encourage fellow Singaporeans to have a mindset of being more accepting towards other cultures, reminding them that Singapore is also from immigrant stock. The reality of today's global world too is that people come and leave. Singaporeans should therefore adopt an open mindset and be more accepting towards foreigners.

## **4. DO YOU AGREE THAT THERE IS LITTLE VALUE IN LITERATURE TODAY?**

### **Analysis**

The assumption is that there was value in literature in the past but not now. That the world today is fast, competitive, materialistic and very practical and as such, has little need for literature. The art of writing, is deemed to have no practical value, relevance or meaning.

### **Clarification of Terms**

- Literature - An art form to do with stories or writings in prose or verse expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest / the body of written works produced in a particular language, country or age / Examples: poetry, novels, history, biography and essays.

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **Yes, I agree that there is little value in literature today**

##### **1. As it has very little to do with real life and its practical concerns.**

Compared to the sciences which can be used in a practical way in our daily life, art cannot do the same. The uses of the sciences, whether biology, chemistry or physics, are varied and seen everywhere. It tells us how the world works and offers solutions to problems that we face in the physical world, our bodies, etc. It can help us live better, save us from disease and disaster. Literature, however, is secondary and more like a leisure or past-time activity that one engages in during our spare time to amuse or entertain ourselves. It is not essential to our survival. In general, many Asian societies (Singapore included) see little value in pursuing the arts, literature included. It may help improve one's language but is unlike mathematics and the technical sciences that can give one more future work options. As such, parents may not encourage their children's interest in literature.

##### **2. As people have little time nor patience to read literature.**

People today are busy with work and family obligations. They are unlikely to spend the little time they have reading literature that will not help them improve their lives in any way. They are more likely to spend time on work-related reading materials and self-help books that will help them get a better job, to better meet their responsibilities or to get promoted. With the family, they are likely to spend leisure time out for a meal or shopping than to read quietly together or alone. Parents may also read up on parenting rather than to read

literature. They may also push their children to read up on enrichment books or more useful books that will help them get better grades rather than to 'waste time' reading make-believe stories. There are also many more trendy leisure activities today that provide fancy alternatives to reading which is more often than not seen as old-fashioned pursuit.

### **3. As there is no longer a culture that values the sustained reading of literature.**

Very few children read in a sustained way these days. The Twitter generation, used to the snappy 140-character captions (including space), do not take to reading literature which requires focus, attention and discipline. They are used to short pieces of writing and are not able to engage deeply in literature that explores themes and motivations of the characters, etc. Many have taken to reading comics as well, whether it is the Japanese manga or the American Marvel super-heroes series. All these provide simple, repetitive tales in bite-size bits for a generation fed on instant information. Web-novels, self-published fiction are all the rage today with but these materials are not always worthy literature. Such writing does not help cultivate good readers as can be seen in some cringe-worthy but extremely popular fan fiction. Everything thinks they can write but do not read the classics to hone their skills.

## **No, I believe there is still value in literature today**

### **1. As it expands our horizons**

Literature opens our eyes and makes us see beyond our own little world. It helps us to realize the many interesting facets of life that literature from other cultures offer. We are exposed to different values and perspectives and this help us build our intuition and instinct to better deal with the myriad situations that may come our way. Many successful global companies have thinkers in their teams who come from different disciplines. Even tech companies recognise the value that input from employees with liberal arts background can bring and often recruit people with with different strengths.

### **2. As it builds our critical thinking skills**

Critical thinking skills can be picked up in literature and language arts classes. When children read, they are taught to read between the lines, to make connections and to infer. They are taught to find symbols, and themes, and to examine the characters. They are taught to explore situations, evaluate, judge, give reasons for their choices. Reading literature expands these skills, especially since they are often 'put' in situations they may not have faced. In learning to look at a sentence with a larger sense of detail and depth, children can learn about the importance of making correct inferences from hidden meanings and this can be a useful skill in dealing with people. In the US, children are routinely exposed to language arts in schools and they learn to think on their feet and are often very vocal, eloquent and competent at getting their views across to people. In Australia's highly-regarded matriculation programmes, students undergo a compulsory arts programme that is intended to help them develop breadth of thinking, range of ideas and the ability to vocalise their thoughts. In Singapore, the NUS-Yale programme aims to do this as well. In literary studies, students analyse literary works, learn the life skills through their questioning of assumptions and norms and the weighing of options.

### **3. As it helps us to understand the past and to appreciate our own / other people and cultures.**

A people's history and culture are intertwined with its literature. A country's story is not just about power struggles, wars and dates. It is about the people who are products of their time. Without literature, we would not know about our families, the lives of our fellowmen, and what came before them and us. Reading cross-cultural literature provides us with a way of learning about other countries, their unique values and beliefs. It allows us to understand and personally 'experience' these other systems of living. Most importantly, we get an insight into the minds and reasoning of someone else. In doing so, we can appreciate them better, even if the book is JD Salinger's controversial 'The Catcher in the Rye', it comes highly recommended by former American President George W Bush and Microsoft's founder, Bill Gates. Such knowledge helps us to make connections in a global world, and is especially relevant to Singapore, which prides itself as one of the world's most diverse and cosmopolitan city states.

#### **4. As it addresses our shared humanity and encourages us to be more empathetic.**

All literature, whether it be poems, essays, novels, or short stories, helps us address our human nature and the conditions which affect us. It may be about life and death, birth and loss our doubts and fears. Rivalry and friendship, jealousy, love, compassion, forgiveness and etc. In short, literature helps us to explore the infinite possibilities in our responses, to live well and to make better choices. Regardless of the context, the setting or where the literature hails from, it speaks of the same universal experiences. Regardless of whether it is Greek or Chinese mythology or even contemporary children's literature like JK Rowling's Harry Potter series, literature teaches good values like empathy and love. The latter, for example is enjoyed by successful people from such different walks of life as England's football captain Wayne Rooney and Facebook's COO, Sheryl Sandberg. Local stories written by Catherine Lim (Little Ironies, the Bondmaid, etc.) and Suzhen Christine Lim (A Bit of Earth, The River's Song, etc.) are long-time favourites that teach values that never go out of fashion and are often included in Singapore schools' reading programmes.

#### **5. As literature hones our imagination and provides us with the ability to think outside the box.**

Everything that man makes, creates or becomes, begins with imagination. The best of technologies that are deemed practical, useful and essential, all start from a creator or a thinker's imagination. Literature, as an art form, does this very job of thinking up of the unlikely, improbable and near impossible. If one cannot imagine it, one cannot make or become it. Steve Jobs never made it as a coder or programmer but from his love of calligraphy (an art of writing), he created beautiful fonts and devices that captivated the world, making Apple Inc. the world's most valuable company. He was also known for enjoying literary classics like Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick', which was incidentally a favourite of former US President Barack Obama, who became America's first black president. Both mentioned in interviews that the novel addresses themes of knowledge and fate that they applied in charting their careers. For the very reason that literature readers can think differently, past dictators and tyrants often destroyed their country's literature in an attempt to stop them from thinking, e.g. China's Cultural Revolution.

## **5. DOES A COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC PROGRESS GUARANTEE QUALITY OF LIFE?**

### **Analysis**

Most developed economies have been highly successful in increasing economic growth. But impressive increase in national output cannot guarantee an improvement in people's quality of life. To decide whether economic growth has increased happiness is highly subjective. It is sometimes assumed that the two terms (economic progress & quality of life) refer to the same thing. There is some overlapping in what is measured but there are also differences. They do not necessarily rise and fall in tandem. Ironically, economic progress can actually detract from one's quality of life even if one's standard of living goes up.

### **Clarification of Terms**

- Economic progress - Economic growth is an increase in the capacity of an economy to produce goods and services, measured most commonly by higher GDP per capita.
- Quality of life - personal satisfaction, including one's standard of living and other non-tangible aspects like happiness, health, one's well-being, opportunity, education, leisure, safety & security, basic rights, one's material and natural living environment, etc.)

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **Yes, a country's economic progress guarantees quality of life**

##### **1. As people benefit from having more choices and the opportunity to buy and consume more.**

People generally gain when there are more goods and services in the country. An assumption of economics is that having more options to buy and consume is related to having greater convenience, efficiency and efficacy in the way we live. To have more is to prosper. To have less, is not. On a basic level, one would rather have more choice



than not, whether it is about simple daily household products that we buy at the supermarket (e.g. meat cuts from Australia, USA or Japan, etc.) or the dining options (Western, Middle-eastern, Asian, etc.) one may have at a lifestyle mall like Ion or Vivocity).

**2. As there are real benefits to having improved services and amenities, especially public goods and services.**

With increased tax revenues the government can spend more on important public services such as health and education. Improved health care can improve quality of life through treating diseases and increasing life expectancy. People will feel more secure and in control of their life when there are various options they can pursue in seeking treatment, e.g. for any one of the first-world health concerns like high cholesterol, gout or even cancer. Increased educational standards can give the population more choices pursuing their interests and a greater diversity of skills and literacy. This empowers young people, giving greater freedom and opportunity to venture out into the world to try out new opportunities. Education is seen as an important determinant of welfare and happiness and Singaporeans benefit from this, being able to welcome and host many foreigners in our small island as well as be welcomed by our counterparts in other countries. Such joint ventures have led to not just economic gains but social ones as well. The universities support exchange programmes to many countries and the government ties up with many industries to encourage overseas stints all over the world.

**3. As there will be reduced unemployment and poverty and greater opportunities for people to achieve their aspirations and be gainfully employed.**

Economic progress helps to reduce unemployment by creating jobs. This is significant because unemployment is a major source of social problems such as crime and alienation. There are great social gains as well. On the personal level, the individual is more secure, leading to the higher chance that they will marry, have a family, buy a home, be invested in the community and have a care for what goes on in society. This leads to greater stability and security for the country. Singapore, like other developed countries, face less crime than in countries where there is want and people lack the necessary means to live. Unemployment is low in Singapore (less than 3%) and in fact, we have more jobs than can be filled by Singaporeans.

**4. As a higher standard of living brings about stability in the community**

The 'broken windows' theory by Wilson and Kelling in 1982 is a metaphor for disorder within neighbourhoods, linking disorder within a community to subsequent occurrences of serious crime. Throughout the 1990's, NYC underwent an aggressive order-maintenance to clean up neighbourhoods which led to a dramatic decrease in crime rates. In Singapore, public housing (HDB) undergoes regular and staggered upgrading in order to spruce up aged and wilted neighbourhoods. This makes it attractive to new tenants and owners, in a way providing fresh blood and preventing them from becoming bad neighbourhoods and enclaves for the marginalised. Such improvements to one's living environment is possible only with strong economic growth.

**No, economic progress does not guarantee quality of life**

**1. As there is diminishing returns on economic progress and growth**

If a section of the population is living in absolute poverty, economic growth enables people to have higher incomes and therefore they will be able to afford the basic necessities of life such as; food, and shelter. When economic growth can overcome this type of poverty there is a clear link with improved living standards. However, when incomes increase from say \$35,000 a year to \$36,000 the improvement in living standards is harder to justify. Diminishing marginal utility of income and wealth is a basic economic concept, which suggests the tenth unit of a good will give much less satisfaction than the first. If we already have 2 cars, does our living standards really improve if we now have the capacity to own 3 cars? Incidentally this is what wealthy Singaporeans do- they buy cars and properties and then more cars and properties. Sometimes too, as economic growth increases incomes, people increasingly save their money. This is basically because they struggle to find anything meaningful

to spend their money on. More is now spent on improving the aesthetics and design of our living environment including the necessary lift upgrading initiative in light of our ageing population.

## **2. As there are related side-effects to such growth**

Economic growth involves increased production, manufacturing and industrialisation. These cause related side effects, such as increased pollution and ultimately global warming which is becoming a real problem for society. The economic and social costs could potentially be greater than all the perceived benefits of recent economic growth. However, it is worth noting that economic growth does not necessarily have to cause pollution. The benefits of growth could be used to develop better green and environmentally-friendly technologies that create less pollution. It is just that the record is spotty as large companies and multi-nationals are at heart more interested in making a profit than saving the environment. Donald Trump's attempt to 'make American great again' by bringing jobs back to the US has led him to reverse Barack Obama's earlier promises on climate change. China's rapid economic growth has also led to much negative environmental impact.

## **3. As economic growth can cause increased inequality.**

It is perhaps a paradox that higher economic growth can cause an increase in relative poverty. This is because those who benefit from growth are often the highly educated and those who own wealth. In 1980s and 1990s higher growth in the UK and US has resulted in increased inequality. However, it depends on how growth is managed; economic growth can be used to reduce inequality, for example the economic growth which occurred in the 50s and 60s helped reduce inequality. There are those who fall by the side, like US's 99%, will have a harder time making a living even if they work longer and longer hours at low-paying gig jobs.

## **4. As there can be an increase in crime and social problems**

It is another paradox that as incomes increase and people are better off the level of crime may increase as well. This suggests that crime is not motivated by poverty but perhaps envy. One reason why crime rates increase is that quite simply there are more things to steal, e.g. cell phones and lap tops, credit card information and e-banking accounts, etc. Basically, economic growth has created more goods to steal. Singapore has attracted foreigners who come here as tourists only to break into homes, cheat in currency exchange (Mexicans and a Chilean at Mustafa Centre) skim credit cards, fix scanners to ATMs, cheat at and use counterfeit chips at the casinos (Chinese & Indian nationals at MBS) etc. They use the internet to set up love/drug mule/money scams (Nigerians target local women). E-commerce cheating scams (Chinese nationals). Human trafficking and prostitution may increase too, e.g. the recent 'high-class' Russian vice ring that was busted in May, 2017.

## **5. As it can lead to more hours worked**

In the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, higher growth led to people working lower hours. However, in the past couple of decades higher incomes have actually led to people working longer hours. With greater use of technology, people were supposed to be able to work less and fewer hours. This has not happened. Work can now be done faster but the time that is freed up has led to workers being pressured to fill it up with more work. It seems people are unable to enjoy their higher incomes. Many feel the necessity or simply prefer to work longer hours, presumably to get more money or better promotions. This suggests people are valuing earning money more than leisure.

## **6. As it can lead to diseases of affluence**

Economic growth has enabled improved health care treatments, but at the same time there has been an unexpected rise in the number of diseases and illnesses related to increased prosperity. One example is obesity. Modern lifestyles and modern diets have created an epidemic of obesity. In Singapore, diabetes is also a huge health concern and it is often related to overeating a too-rich diet and a sedentary lifestyle. In recent years, higher childhood obesity cases in Singapore has led to higher childhood rates of diabetes as well. A host of other mental

and emotional problems may come with economic growth, given that people may overwork, not have time to cultivate close relationships, feel lonely or isolated, become obsessed with wealth or be distrustful of others due to their wealth, etc. Another concern is that the top-quality health care system comes at a very high cost for those who need its services and many in Singapore are also afraid of what the future may hold when they fall sick.

## **6. 'THERE IS NO HARM IN THE YOUNG TRYING EVERYTHING THEY WANT'. DO YOU AGREE?**

### **Analysis**

It is a common belief that young people should be given the liberty to try anything they want while they have the luxury to undo or restart any unsuccessful endeavours. However, this belief could also be seen as a controversial and even dangerous “blank cheque” for young people to try things that could eventually prove to be detrimental to themselves and others.

### **Clarification of Terms**

- No harm – no foreseeable dangers/ undesirable outcomes.
- Everything they want – all conceivable endeavours/ activities deemed favourable by the young.

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **No harm**

- 1. Young people are highly adaptable and would be able to rebound better should they fail in the things they try.**

Very often, young people are too afraid to try new things for fear of failing. They tend to stick to a safe and familiar route in life where the risks are minimised. While these risks in taking the road less travelled may be real at times, such young people underestimate their potential to rebound and gain even higher grounds after each setback. Hence, the “harm” that one associates with trying everything they want is usually overhyped since young people have the capacity to circumvent and overcome these so-called harm. A case in point would be how young Singaporeans tend to underestimate themselves when they often believe more in the possible harm that comes with trying everything they like than in themselves: very few young Singaporeans refrain from venturing beyond the tried-and-tested academic route that their peers take (eg. the fear of losing out if they do not take the JC to University route); even fewer would dare try to follow their true passions in life.

- 2. The so-called ‘harms’ are actually good for personal growth.**

To develop resilience, young people should be try everything they want even when there are real harms and risks involved. Instead of being overly-protective, society, schools and parents should encourage young people to bravely face these harms and reframed them as “challenges” that could possibly stretch their growth to become stronger and more resilient individuals. With cautious and well-monitored practices, these harms could well become catalysts for personal growth and development. In particular, this is most evidently demonstrated in how young people should explore and try different types of professions they want before settling down a one final career of their choice. This process of trying different professions and in learning different skills-sets by “roughing it out” would invariably toughen up a young person which would eventually make him a better worker – and for that matter, a more reliable human being.

- 3. Trying everything would help a person become more creative and innovative.**

In this VUCA 21<sup>st</sup> Century world filled with the complex issues that usually require a multi-pronged approach in addressing them, a successful person would need to be highly creative and innovative. Such traits could only be developed if a person gets to try everything he or she wants without any fear of any possible harm. Individuals like Steve Jobs, Jack Ma and Elon Musk all tried a plethora of different ventures and misadventures before they became successful. On hindsight, these creative and innovative trailblazers often attributed their sense of creativity to their penchant to try as many things as possible. Indeed, by not conforming to the one-track-mind disposition in life, one

would be exposed to a far richer composition of possibilities which will lead to greater scope of creative solutions to solve complex problems in this modern world.

### **There is harm**

#### **1. Although the young may gain in short run trying everything they want, there is some long term harmful consequences.**

While it is most gratifying in the short run for young people to try everything all in the name of experimentation in their lives, there are likely to be some subtle long term harmful consequences which they would need to face in their later years. In the 1960s and 1970s, young hippies in America, Britain and other Western societies experimented with various recreational drugs which they claimed helped them to be more artistic and at peace with themselves and others had subsequently suffered various drug related diseases which threatened their sanity and lives.

#### **2. Young people who try everything they want may end up hurting the people around them.**

While it may be true that young people may gain in their existential and practical experiences as they try everything they want, they may end up harming the people around them especially their loved ones inadvertently. Young people who perpetually wish to try different gigs and jobs just to see if it suits their lifestyles and liking may not realise that people who depend on them for sustenance (eg. aged parents who have failing health) are suffering in their wait for them to settle down with a stable income. More significantly, if all young people in our society embrace the so-called entrepreneurial dare without sparing a thought for their family members and for those who depend on them, the society may not experience the kind of economic and social stability made possible by a group of young people who choose to try only those endeavours that guarantee success. In other words, this mentality to “try everything” that panders to the young’s fancies is a self-serving ethos.

#### **3. Trying everything might create an overly-jaded generation of young people.**

The assumption that young people have the capacity to rebound and that their resilience will only grow with every tried and failed endeavour is not fully valid. Indeed, for those who experienced “productive failures” like Albert Einstein, Jack Ma and Richard Branson happened to be those who are born with a sheer sense of resilience which normal people could only aspire to have. In reality, ordinary people who blindly try everything they lay their eyes on may more often than not become so discouraged and jaded that they may never recover in life. Some may even become cynical, depressed or even suicidal after trying everything without any successes.

## **7. ‘THE ENVIRONMENT IS THE MAIN CAUSE OF OUR HEALTH WOES TODAY’ DISCUSS.**

### **Analysis**

In the past two decades, major environmental issues that have a negative impact on human health have been featured very prominently and regularly in our media. As such, it appears to be a major contributor to our ill health. However, other than such adverse environmental causes, there are actually other factors that are also undesirable and harmful to our health. This question examines all these causes. Students must ensure that they compare the different causes’ impact to that of the environment in order to establish which cause is the main cause.

### **Clarifications of Terms**

- Main cause of – Not the only one, but it is the foremost, principal or major contributor of.
- Health woes – All kinds of health problems and ailments, e.g. allergies, asthma, cancer, coronary diseases, etc.

***NOTE:** The arguments below are to be paired with the ones above respectively as possible CA-R’s. Students are expected to make comparisons between the 2 stands.*

## **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

### **Environment is the main cause of health woes**

#### **1. Environmental pollution is one of the main contributors of health woes today.**

The Industrial Revolution began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and then spread all over the world. While we gained much economically, unfortunately, it was also a time when there was a drastic increase in pollution to the environment, which continues today. Auto-vehicles add on to our pollution and health woes. And the extensive uses of fossil fuels and toxic chemicals have led to land, air and water pollution, and this has impacted human health detrimentally. According to the website, History, in 1948, severe industrial air pollution created a deadly smog that asphyxiated 20 people in Donora, Pennsylvania, and made 7,000 more sick. In the Great Smog of 1952, pollutants from factories and home fireplaces killed at least 4,000 people in London over several days. Today, the release of human-produced sulphur and nitrogen compounds into the atmosphere negatively impacts plants, fish, soil, forests. When humans consume such tainted fish, animals and plants from these areas, our health is affected negatively too.

#### **2. Seasonal changes in the environment could also cause our health to deteriorate.**

Pollens from flowering plants, mould and grass are widespread and causes of allergies. Allergic reactions vary from mild itch of the eyes and runny noses to severe breathing problems that could be life threatening, e.g. serious asthmatic attacks. Most people look forward to spring when beautiful flowers bloom. Unfortunately for others, this is a season when they suffer most from allergies, beginning in February to mid-summer. Trees (spring), grass (summer) such as Johnson, Timothy and Rye, and ragweed (fall) are main allergens. At times, mild spring temperatures could lead to early plant pollination, or a rainier spring could cause plants to grow more abundantly, all of which are not helpful to those who are prone to allergies. Allergies cause much misery to the sufferers and also downtime in productivity. Statistics obtained from the Netherlands' Central Bureau of Statistics over eight years revealed that there was an average of more than 330 deaths daily due to corresponding data for airborne pollen concentrations.

#### **3. Today, natural disasters could result in certain environmental conditions that could lead to the spreading of diseases.**

The changing weather patterns nowadays have brought about many natural disasters. Global warming is the main cause of changing weather patterns today. Extreme heatwaves could kill, especially for the more vulnerable elderly people and children. Between April and May 2015, a heatwave in India killed more than 2,200 people, with temperatures a scorching 47-degree Celsius, 7-degree above normal. Andhra Pradesh suffered the most, with 1,636 dying. According to the website, Climate Hot Map, global warming has led to changing precipitation patterns which could create prolonged drought, causing forest and peat fires and endangering the lives of residents and firefighters. A warming atmosphere also increases the chance of extreme rainfall and flooding. In many heavily populated areas, sea level rise from the melting arctic will cause storm surges and coastal flooding.

### **There are other causes of our poor health today**

#### **1. Rather than environmental factors, our sedentary and stressful lifestyle and unhealthy habits contribute to our ill health today.**

Admittedly, pollution in the environment could impact our health negatively, but our health is very much within our control and management too. Potato couch and television surfing. Online gaming. Fast food. Smoking. A lack of physical exercise. Recreational drugs. The slow economy that leads to increased unemployment, more intense work competition and unending deadlines that cause a very stressful lifestyle as compared to the past. Physical inactivity and an unhealthy diet have been proven to cause certain cardiovascular diseases, e.g. obesity that make people at risk of heart attacks. Smoking is also cancer causing, and recreational drugs cause addiction that eats up the health of people. All these are modern-day phenomena that have contributed to our ill health. According to a John Hopkins article, physical inactivity could also lead to an increase risk of certain cancers, anxiety and depression, a decrease in skeletal-muscle mass and elevated blood pressure and cholesterol levels. In addition,

advancements in technology have brought us much convenience that reduces physical toil for tedious tasks that we used to labour over; and conversely, technological advancements also lead to a faster pace of life that increases pressure, and they compound the problem of ill health. These numerous causes are self-inflicted, man made, and the environment is surely not a culprit.

**2. Other than the environment causing us to fall ill, there are people who are born with defective genes that make them genetically more prone to certain diseases.**

It is true that seasonal environmental changes could result in ill health, such as seasonal allergies. However, our own biological tendency could also be the reason why people become more prone to such seasonal sicknesses. Due to a person's genetic makeup, it could cause him to be predisposed to certain diseases. For example, there are people whose genetic makeup make them more inclined to have seasonal allergies than others. And in 2015, two years after very famously having a double mastectomy, Angela Jolie also removed her ovaries and fallopian tubes due to a cancer scare. Before that, she was found to be carrying a genetic mutation that increased the potential of her contracting fatal breast cancer, like her mother, and thus, the mastectomy. Genetic disorders could also be hereditary where the defective genes are passed on from parents to their children.

**3. The environment aside, the country that one is born in could also impact our health negatively, due mainly to the poor economic state of the country and a lack of adequate medical facilities.**

Although our environment could induce illnesses, however where one lives could also impact health. The infant mortality rates in third world countries are much higher than those in developed countries. According to 2016 World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, in developing countries, nearly half of mothers and newborns do not receive skilled care during and immediately after birth, and up to two-thirds of newborn deaths can be prevented if effective health measures are provided at birth. In other words, the vast majority of newborn deaths take place in developing countries, and they have nothing to do with the environment.

**8. 'SMALL COUNTRIES CAN NEVER MAKE A REAL IMPACT IN TODAY'S WORLD.' DISCUSS.**

**Analysis**

There is an assumption that countries which are small in terms of land area and population are unable to make a significant impact or contribution (in the areas of politics, economics, cultures, etc) in the world. Vice versa, it is believed that size truly matters and big countries are the ones that can make a real difference in the world with their larger resources or political and economic clout. Students should recognise the extreme word 'never' in the question and address whether it is indeed true that small countries can never make a significant impact in the global context. Better students would recognise the complexities of the world today, and the strengths of small countries as well as difficulties that they face and evaluate these according to the actual impact they are able to make in the world today.

**Clarification of Terms**

- Small countries - states which are small in terms of land area and population
- Real impact - genuine / significant / visible effect

**Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

**Small countries can make a real impact in today's world**

**1. As the success stories of small countries can serve as learning points for other countries.**

Small in terms of land area or population does not necessarily mean that these countries are lacking in other areas for example, knowledge or skills in areas like education or science and technology. In fact small countries often have niche areas where they excel and can make a genuine impact on other countries when they share their expertise and knowledge to benefit other countries. For example, Israel may be a small country, but its contribution to the world of technology has been immense. Notable Israeli companies include Mobileye which develops driver

assistance technology to prevent accidents and major companies like Audi and Tesla Motors have embedded its technology into their cars. According to Business Insider, Israel continues to produce an impressive number of highly successful tech companies for a country with a population of just 9 million people. This is the reason why Israel is sometimes referred to as "Startup Nation" thanks to the huge number of entrepreneurs building businesses there and attracting investors worldwide. Also, Singapore's education system has built up a sound reputation over the years and countries like Japan and the United States have demonstrated a keen interest to learn more about and adapt our educational practices by sending teams of teachers to study Singapore's system.

## **2. As small countries can serve as middlemen and facilitate negotiation between conflicting countries in a political stalemate.**

In order to protect their own countries' interests and avoid being identified too closely with bigger countries, small countries often play the role as an 'honest broker' in disputes and conflicts among bigger countries. This enables them to be efficient mediators and help other countries come to a resolution or agreement. A good example is Norway which has a limited size – both in terms of population and economic prowess. Over the years, many Norwegian diplomats have acted as third-party mediators in several international conflicts, including in Bosnia and Sudan. In addition, in hosting the Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine, Norway can appear to be working as an international mediator trying her very hardest to work in the interest of international peace, whilst at the same time vastly increasing her soft power by nation branding, as a country that shows her commitment to and ability to engage successfully in "international peace brokering" and diplomacy.

## **3. As small countries can bond together to make a difference.**

A small power recognizes that it may face difficulties by relying solely on its own capabilities. This explains why small countries tend to bond in coalitions to enable their voices to be heard more clearly. For example, Singapore is supportive of platforms that allow small states to discuss and foster common positions on issues of mutual concern, thereby giving them a bigger voice on the global stage. In 1992 in New York, Singapore established an informal grouping of small states known as the Forum of Small States (FOSS). Membership in FOSS is on a non-ideological and non-geographical basis. It now comprises more than 100 countries and meets a few times a year to discuss issues of concern to small states. In particular the inaugural 2012 FOSS Conference on Small States profiled the role and contributions of small states in the international arena, and also provided a platform to share experiences and strategies for development among small states. Also, small island countries in the Pacific are in imminent danger of being washed into the sea as sea levels rise due to climate changes.

## **4. As small countries are able to wield soft power as a means to appeal to and influence others.**

Soft power can be displayed in the attractiveness of countries' cultures, political ideals, and policies. For example, even though it is a small island state, the Maldives has attained significant economic growth by developing and establishing its reputation in the tourism sector. Also, by acting as an international benchmark on specific issues, small states can become leading experts, investing in specific issues in order to set global margins. For example, Denmark's environmental knowledge is seen as world leading. Denmark's success in addressing growing demand for renewable energy and other clean technologies and increasing international engagement across the cleantech ecosystem was recognised when it came in tops in the Global Cleantech Innovation Index 2017.

### **Small countries can never make a real impact in today's world**

#### **1. As in reality, small countries face many limitations that hinder them from making effective and long term impacts.**

Due to the small area and population size, small countries tend to face many constraints like a lack of natural resources or human resources to contribute or compete actively at the global stage. For example, many small countries do not produce as many Nobel Prize Science or Literature winners as compared to the big countries

simply because they have fewer outstanding individuals in these areas. Also, most of the more well-known entertainment and sports celebrities tend to come from bigger countries which have bigger talent pools and monetary as well as physical resources to better support the development of these industries.

## **2. As scholars and leaders of small countries tend to be more cautious of rocking the boat and challenging the big countries.**

Small countries are well aware of the boundaries they have and the repercussions of being overly vocal on the international stage and risk offending bigger countries. As a result, leaders of small countries tend to be very guarded in their words and actions. As a result, in order to avoid the risk of conflict with other countries, even when it is not deliberate, small countries tend to play the safe card. This was precisely the topic of heated debate recently with Mr Kishore Mahbubani, an academic and former diplomat, who raised the idea that “small states must always behave like small states”. In the light of what happened to Qatar, his advice for Singapore is: “What's the first thing we should do? Exercise discretion. We should be very restrained in commenting on matters involving great powers.” Clearly his view ignited much debate in Singapore. However, with such cautiousness, it is no wonder that these small countries are unable to make significant contributions.

## **3. As small countries simply lack the power to shape political world events.**

Small countries also simply lack the hard power to shape events as they do not possess the military strength to send armed forces or equipment for warfare to aid other countries. In a 2016 Global Firepower Index which compares military power by countries, out of 133 countries, it is unsurprising that big countries like China, India and the USA emerge tops of the list. Top country on the list China for instance has about 3,712,500 total military personnel as compared to Singapore's 504,500 (Singapore's ranking is at 101). Also the US has been prolific in supporting the Syrian opposition by providing military personnel as well as weapons such as assault rifles, anti-tank rocket launchers and other ammunition. The US State Department has reportedly allocated millions of dollars for civilian opposition groups in Syria. Clearly smaller countries which do not possess hard power in the form of military and economic means would not be able to participate directly in world events. In fact, more often than not, small countries are at the mercy of the actions of bigger countries and are unable to do much to retaliate as they simply lack the means or might to do so. One instance is that of Qatar and the Qatar-Gulf crisis in June 2017 when several countries abruptly cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar by withdrawing ambassadors, and imposing trade and travel bans.

# **9. HOW EFFECTIVE HAS YOUR COUNTRY BEEN IN CREATING A NATIONAL IDENTITY?**

## **Analysis**

A country's national identity is a vital constituent of its existence. How successfully the country manages its identity has a very significant impact on its expression of itself, how other countries perceive it, how the country interacts with others, and its international stature, in all sense of the word. It is definitely not easy to derive or acquire a national identity, especially when the country does not have a homogenous population with similar needs and aspirations. Globalisation today and the relative ease of migration complicate this issue exponentially. As such, this question requires writers to evaluate well a country manages its construct of its own national identity, bearing in mind that each country is unique and therefore there is no one approach that could be deemed to be the most successful as it all depends on the history, culture and composition of a country.

## **Clarifications of key terms**

- How effective – Requires evaluation of the success or lack of, of how the creation of a national identity has been managed.
- Creating – The deliberate and planned process of conceiving and establishing.
- National identity – National identity is a sense of belonging to a state or nation, as represented by distinctive traditions, cultures, languages and politics. It does not necessarily need to be mandated or



commissioned by the government. It could be something that is organic and personal even. (Sometimes, national identity is something that we do not even think about, and ironically, it only becomes an issue when leave a home country to go abroad for us to better appreciate it.)

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **Singapore has successfully created a national identity**

- 1. Singapore's lingua franca, English, is a major bonding factor for its citizens, establishing its national identity as a united and harmonious multi-racial society.**

The English language does not merely serve as a tool of commerce to facilitate communication with the rest of the world, it actually plays an important role in this multi-racial nation to help bring about national unity. In the initial years of Singapore's independence when its population was mostly illiterate, people spoke in their native tongues and dialects, and this segregated the different ethnic groups. Realising that this could be a potential incendiary racial sparkplug, the government instituted the bilingual education policy for children, with English being the principal language. Over the years, these children have grown up speaking English, and that serves as a common language now, such that regardless of race, Singaporeans are able to understand one another. This transcends any differences that they might have and provides a common platform for the various races to bond.

- 2. Singapore's meritocratic system is the common denominator that cultivates shared values among Singaporeans.**

Singapore's education system adopts a common syllabus, with civics lessons that allow the sharing of our common historical and economic narratives. Many Singaporeans of humble backgrounds have benefited from this meritocratic educational system and risen in social economic status. As such, the Singaporean educational system plays a crucial role in enabling everyone an equal opportunity to go through the same system and to succeed. No one race has an unfair advantage over another. This shared system therefore imbues in Singaporeans the same set of values, attitude and ethos. Despite Singapore being be a young nation, a discernible semblance of national identity is beginning to emerge and will continue to be reinforced with time.

- 3. The brand name of Singapore is synonymous to quality.**

The ascension of Singapore from a backward fishing village to a first-world technologically advanced country – all achieved within a generation – is a miracle that is unlikely to be replicated anywhere else in this world. From its world renown peerless education system where its students dominate the global PISA educational rankings, to having a sea port and airport of international standing, to even being a famous food paradise, Singapore has surpassed many developed countries that are much larger than itself. Steeped in Confucian teachings, Singaporean workers are also known among employers to be both hardworking and honest.

#### **Singapore has somewhat faltered in creating its national identity**

- 1. Singapore's paternalistic government and strict laws often caused it to be stereotyped as a straight-laced and no-nonsense nation, full of boring people.**

Tourists are often amused by what infringements of the laws here could land people in hot soup. It is well known that Singapore is a finE city, where we get fined for not only littering, but also not flushing the toilets and jaywalking. Vandals could be caned – literally. There is a ban on the sales of chewing gum. Opposition party members are sued for daring to smear the reputations of dominant PAP members. And horror of horrors, capital punishment for drug trafficking is still administered in this modern day and age! While we may enjoy a low crime environment and live in a Garden in a City, we have unfortunately been labelled as socialist country with dictators as leaders, and the citizens as compliant puppets who have no sense of humour and could not laugh at ourselves. Many articles in foreign publications have even questioned if Singapore is truly democratic and some of them have been sued for defamation.

## **2. Singapore's short history and heterogeneous population make it difficult to create a national identity.**

With no common traditions, Singapore has been having a hard time trying to derive a national identity. The Malay language is Singapore's national language. Ironically, other than the Malay themselves, the rest of Singaporeans, who form the majority, do not learn Malay, and most are not even aware that Malay is their national language. In addition, Singaporeans no longer identify with the countries of origin of our ancestors, which translates to a weaker link to our roots, and therefore, an ethnic identity. We are just an assortment of disparate races that is not unlike oil and water. We don't even have a national costume.

## **3. There is not much – ideologically nor culturally – that bind Singaporeans to Singapore, causing our ties with one another to be tenuous.**

Pragmatism rules in Singapore, not anything that is ideological or cultural in nature. Unfortunately, the latter two factors are often what matter most in creating a national identity. It is precisely because Singaporeans are so pragmatic, they will not hesitate to move to a different country when conditions there are more ideal. Some top reasons why Singaporeans emigrate include less pressure abroad, more work opportunities elsewhere, more freedom and less strict in another country and Singapore literally having not much room to grow. And being well educated, it is easy for Singaporeans to leave. There is nothing ideological or cultural that could hold them back and cause them to think twice before settling their families in other countries. Pragmatism is pervasive, and it permeates the psyche of Singaporeans. Indeed, this tendency is observed especially in the millennials who are raised in a more affluent environment and have more opportunities to travel and compare Singapore with other countries. They find the educational system here overly pressurising and work life to be tough, with Singaporeans being one of the unhappiest people in the world.

## **10. DOES MODERN TECHNOLOGY SATISFY OUR WANTS RATHER THAN OUR NEEDS?**

### **Analysis**

Students need to distinguish and clearly define what needs and wants are. The context of the question is implied by the use of the word 'modern' and they should be able to see that needs can change over time.

*The better scripts will be able to take a nuanced stand and recognize that modern technology satisfies both our wants and needs.*

### **Clarification of Terms**

- Satisfy - meet the expectations of
- Wants - Wants are unlimited and are a human desire to get something additional. Something that you would like to have but not something that you cannot live without.
- Needs - Needs are fundamental for human survival

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **Yes, technology satisfy our wants rather than our needs**

##### **1. Tech companies are profit-driven and it is more lucrative to meet people's desires.**

In our increasingly consumeristic and materialist society, we are driven by our desire to acquire material goods. By taking advantage of such a mind-set, tech companies push out model after model of smartphones, tablets and computers. This mind-set can also lead people to be emotionally invested in a blind pursuit of owning goods. Apple achieved a cult following by manipulating people's emotions and producing quality products. Some believe that Apple has gone beyond forming an emotional connection and has instead achieved a neurological connection with its customers. It creates a strong psychological and emotional response that operates on a subconscious level which leads to addiction. Apple's revenue at Q3 2017 was \$45.4 billion, up 7% year-over-year with its iPad sales at \$11.42m, up 14% year-over-year. In comparison, engaging in non-profit organizations and their aims do not earn them any money and this sort of connection is rarely found towards companies providing basic necessities such as NTUC or PUB where people prioritise value for money and practicality over unbridled purchase.

New technology is also constantly creating new desires and wants through personalized advertisements that also creates desires for items that we did not know we needed or wanted. Mobile applications companies also create and supply many gaming applications that feed on people's need for entertainment and addiction by charging for in-game purchases – these games earn much more money for the app developers as compared to practical applications such as alarm clocks and calendars.

## **2. Technology has already done more than enough to address our basic needs. It is evolving and driven by what we want from it.**

Over the past century, there has been a massive surge in the amount of convenience technologies. In the past, the wheel was invented to help transport goods and supplies across long distances. Then the industrial revolution came along and with it, steam engine powered locomotives and ships. This was followed by cars and planes. All these were invented because they were needed to fulfil a need – to transport people and goods across long distances, and this need has been fulfilled. Modern technologies however, are driven by people's desires for better, faster and more luxurious cars and planes. Cars, instead of being a necessity, has now become a status symbol. Luxury car sales in Australia grew by 11 per cent in 2016, compared with just 2 per cent growth for the rest of the industry. This can also be seen in Singapore where there has been a decline in the overall number of cars but an increase in the number of luxury cars. As of 2016, the high-end brands comprised about 22% of cars in Singapore compared to 17% they represented in 2013. These luxury cars represent the excesses and unnecessariness of the consumeristic culture. Even Tesla, a car company that strives to create zero-emissions, is more attractive to consumers because of its style and looks and not its environmental benefits.

### **Technology does satisfy our needs rather than our wants**

#### **1. Technological advancement has helped solve important problems such as access to clean water, medicine and food around the world and continues to solve these problems today.**

The Green Revolution has doubled rice production in many Third World countries such as India, China and Pakistan. Between 1960 and 2000, yields for all developing countries rose 208% for wheat, 109% for rice, 157% for maize, 78% for potatoes, and 36% for cassava. More recently, many innovative products have been invented and used to improve the quality of life for those in developing countries.

#### **2. (Individual) As society evolves and modernises, what was once considered luxury are now basic necessities and technology is still utilized today to meet our new needs.**

What defines our wants and needs have evolved as our quality of life increases. These new needs include, portable communication devices such as smartphones, access to the internet, access to modern healthcare and many other electronic devices.

- Medical Technology – what was once cosmetic or elective procedures are now considered normal or even essential procedures. In the earliest days of plastic surgery, people sometimes tried to minimise or disguise that they had engaged in a facial rejuvenation of body-contouring surgery. Such choices were sometimes referred to as 'vanity' and only for the wealthy. Aesthetic procedures are losing their taboo even in traditionally more conservative countries like Singapore and Malaysia. However, in today's world, having 'work' done is the new norm and is no longer frowned upon. In Korea, double eyelid surgery is almost seen as necessary and single eyelids are perceived as a birth defect.

#### **3. (National) Technology satisfies the changing needs of nations.**

As the world evolves, so do our needs and threats. To survive in this competitive world with little natural resources, Singapore aims to become a knowledge-based industry which thrives on innovation and enterprise and to be

successful, she needs to leverage on research and technology. The Singapore government's R&D spending in 2016 is at about 1% of GDP, comparable to the US. Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said: "Essentially R&D is an investment in our own future. It's an expression of belief in Singapore and Singapore's future and if we want to be a knowledge-based economy, which thrives on innovation and enterprise, and to build this knowledge base on which we can build the future of Singapore, then R&D is where we have to invest."

- Smart Nation: Far from being excessive, Vivian Balakrishnan, who was minister for environment and water resources until October 2015, as well as the head of the Smart Nation Initiative, told the audience at an innovation event in April 2015 that, "What you see in Singapore is an exercise of desperate imagination. It's not about innovation because it's sexy, but because it's survival."

To be safe in this time and age, technology can help us secure of basic need of safety and security efficiently and reliably. Technology aids in crime investigation and forensic science. Laser Ablation Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS): When broken glass is involved in a crime, putting together even tiny pieces can be key to finding important clues like the direction of bullets, the force of impact or the type of weapon used in a crime. With this technology, forensic scientists are able to match even the smallest shard of glass found on clothing to a glass sample from a crime scene.

## **11. IS IT BETTER FOR A COUNTRY TO FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG THAN ON NEEDS OF THE REST OF SOCIETY?**

### **Analysis**

Since this is a comparison question, students need to ensure consistent comparison is being made throughout the essay between the youth and the rest of society.

### **Clarification of Terms**

- Needs - According to Maslow Hierarchy of Needs, there 5 layers of needs: physiological/biological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **Yes, it is better for a country to focus on the needs of the young**

- 1. The young represents the hope for our future, thus, investing in the young is akin to investing in the country's future.**

By focusing on youth and youth-related programs, governments ensure a more prosperous future for the country and its economy. In 2011, the world reached a historic milestone with seven billion people, 1.8 billion of which are youth aged 10 to 24. And of this young population, 90 percent live in developing countries. This generation, the most interconnected generation ever, continues to grow rapidly, and the challenges they face are ever more daunting. We need to focus on providing quality education and creating a stable society so that our young will be able to navigate the volatile future. Also, with the increase in the amount of fake news and the accessibility to such information, it is vital that the youth be taught critical reading and evaluative skills to ensure that they become well-informed adults. It is also important to engage them since habits and mentality formed during their developmental years would affect them when they are older. The Chief Executive of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kate Carnell, fears that if young people are not engaged and working, we are creating a lost generation and if the young are disengaged from society, it could lead to long-term unemployment and the prospect of hundreds of thousands of unemployed floating in society constitutes a very real and big problem.

- 2. The young represents the energy and risk-taking attitude societies need, thus, focusing on them can help to rejuvenate society and the economy.**

Nelson Mandela once said: "Whenever I am with young people, I feel like a recharged battery." Youth, with all their optimism and energy, think big, hope for the best and envision a better tomorrow, making unceasing efforts to turn their dreams into concrete actions. The young are not risk-averse yet and are willing to constantly try and innovate

to solve problems. Organisations are starting to understand that much more can be achieved through young people. They are more likely to learn and adapt, try new and innovative ways to meet customer needs, and can be associated with higher levels of team performance - a key feature in today's work structures. The team work environment has proved to enhance creativity as it relates to team performance. Infusions of young blood can rejuvenate tired organisations and fill them with new energy and purpose. They signal the kind of energy the society should have.

### **3. The young is a potential threat to progress and stability since they have less to lose.**

The young are characterised by their passion, energy, and boldness, so when they believe in a cause, they usually actively participate in it to show their support. Together with today's technological advances, such as the Internet and social media, the youth have easy access to the tools that allow them to galvanise for change. According to a global survey done by Havas Worldwide, around 70% of youth believe that social media is a force for change. Around the world, youth are using social media to monitor the effectiveness of public service. In countries such as Paraguay and Brazil, they are using Facebook and Twitter to make official data available publicly to inform and mobilize their peers. In Latvia, two 23-year-olds built an e-petition system so their fellow Latvians could submit and support proposals for policy change. The government then looks at petitions supported by at least 20% of the population. Student activists played a vital role in the Bersih Movement in Malaysia, the fall of Suharto in Indonesia and more recently, the Protests for Democracy in Hong Kong. However, it is important to help them achieve their dreams and ambitions by providing the appropriate and right guidance, if not, the young might invest their energy in counter-progressive actions. Thus it is better to engage them positively than to leave them alone.

### **No, the country should focus on the needs of the rest of society**

#### **1. Because the rest make up the majority of the population and they also have much more to contribute as compared to the youth, in both the workforce and the society.**

Youth and children make up about 40% of the world's population. In developed countries, such as the US and Singapore, the young only makes up about 30% of the country's population. Compared to the young, adults and the elderly work and make actual contributions to the country. They contribute economically through their employment and productivity at work by injecting new drive and energy, and coming up with new and innovative practices. They also contribute to the society by forming new families. The family is a basic unit of society and the adults contribute to that by forming marriages, giving birth and educating and transmitting cultural norms and traditions to the young. Adults also have a greater impact politically as they have the power to weigh in on national issues and eventually vote in the government that will lead the country. Thus, compared to the young, adults can make real contributions and enact actual changes that affect society making it more important to focus on their needs in order to ensure a happy and productive workforce.

#### **2. Because a good government would ensure that all citizens are taken care of, regardless of who they are.**

The primary roles of a government are to protect and provide for its citizens. A government can cushion the inability of citizens to provide for themselves, particularly in the vulnerable conditions of youth, old age, sickness, disability and unemployment due to economic forces beyond their control. This is especially important in our increasingly volatile economy.

#### **3. Because problems that the youth face in comparison to the rest of the society are less pressing and less severe.**

In a survey done by YMCA in the UK, some of the top concerns of the young were their failure to succeed in the education system, body image issues and pressures of materialism. This pales in comparison to the severity of the pressing concerns of adults today; the economy, governance, unemployment and national security. While the concerns of the young might be valid to them, they are issues that are confined to their age and will pass with them whereas the larger concerns of the rest of the population have graver and wider implications. In saying that, when

the country focuses on the needs of the rest of the population, they are going to be building a better future for the youth as it is more strategic to help the adults first. The benefits of a more stable, more educated, more well-off adult population will trickle down to their children, leading to a better group of youth in the future.

## **12. 'THE RIGHT TO DIE SHOULD BE RESPECTED AS MUCH AS THE RIGHT TO LIVE'. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?**

### **Analysis**

The contention lies in the belief that one's right to die should be respected equally as one's right to live. The belief that one should have the right to die is the main basis behind the idea of euthanasia or even suicide. There are those who conversely believe that life is sacred, and while one should be entitled to the inalienable right to live, the right to take away one's own life is not ours to claim.

### **Clarification of Terms**

- Right to die – the sole prerogative to decide when one should die, regardless of one's medical condition.
- Right to live – the inalienable right to sustain one's own life/ moral principle that one should not be killed by another person.

### **Stand / Possible Points and Examples**

#### **The right to die should be respected as much as the right to live.**

- 1. If we truly respect a fellow human being and his autonomy as a discerning individual, we should respect their right to live as much as their right to die.**

Although the right to live is universally recognised internationally and chartered as one of the key rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the right to die is often deemed as sacrilegious. This dismissal of the right to die does not respect the individual's true autonomy to decide what is best for his life and casts doubts on his discretion as an individual. Indeed, if we truly respect a person's right to live, we should not be practising a double standard of morality in denying his right to end his life in dignity. Individuals who are suffering from chronic and terminal diseases are very often not only suffering physically, but are also deprived of their dignity as they are forced to see themselves deteriorating beyond their control.

- 2. Right to die should be made legal or else there will be social ills.**

If one's right to die is not accorded with equal respect as one's right to live, people who have been physically and psychologically suffering would be forced to take illegal means to end their lives in a violent and anti-social manner. To these long-suffering individuals, they are plagued not only by their physical and mental illnesses, but also by the stigma placed on them by society for entertaining such "immoral thoughts" of ending their lives. This adds to their misery and shame which may eventually pushed them to commit suicide as a result of social isolation. We see this as a common trend amongst the senior citizens in Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong and in other developed nations where they feel that they no longer have the dignity nor social empathy to continue living meaningfully. In the long run, a high suicide rate in a society will be deemed as a social ill which reflects negatively on the whole nation. If the right to die is respected and legally recognised, a proper and comprehensive process can be exacted by the State to alleviate individuals from their chronic suffering since they have been medically justified for euthanasia.

- 3. The right to die should not be disdained as death is part of life.**

Given that death is part of life, the right to die must come together with one's right to live. The process of dying is part of life, and invariably it is this phase of 'living' that is most uncertain and painful. If the right to life means the right to minimise pain and maximise positive experiences in one's life, then surely the painful process of dying for those with terminal illnesses or for those who have no further meaning to continue their existence, should be managed or even expedited under the individual's wish and control. Death in such cases, is therefore not a bad thing for these individuals, but may ironically be the sweetest part in their lives.

## **The right to die should not be respected as much as the right to live**

### **1. Arguments on the right to die is sophistry that masquerades a self-centred attitude towards life which should not be encouraged and endorsed.**

Regardless of all the arguments that support the right to die, the underlying agenda is self-centred and self-serving as people who wish to end their lives on their own terms and conditions do not spare a thought for those around them. While it seems defensible for people who are suffering from chronic illnesses to claim their right to die, these people fail to understand or perhaps accept that life is not free from pain and suffering. They tend to believe that the world revolves around them and that they alone should decide on when they should end their lives, without reflecting on the effects of such a self-serving action on the people around them (especially their loved ones). Moreover, if the right to die is respected and legalised, the message conveyed to the society on the whole is detrimental especially for the young and impressionable who may believe that death is an easy way out of difficulties in life where they do not need to account to their family and loved ones.

### **2. The right to die could be abused by medical professionals and even family members.**

Respecting the right to die through legalised euthanasia may end up as a cost effective way to manage the terminally ill. In March 2013, a Reuters report shocked the world when it disclosed that Dr. Virginia Soares de Souza from Brazil was charged with 7 counts of murder and may have killed 300 patients in order to, reportedly, “free-up” beds. Separately, three studies from the Flanders region of Belgium also found that 32% of all euthanasia deaths were done without explicit request; 47% of all euthanasia deaths were not reported as euthanasia; nurses are euthanizing their patients, even though the Belgium law limits the act of euthanasia to doctors. There have also been cases reported where patients who were so ill that they were not lucid enough to contest the family members’ request for euthanasia, where the latter were ultimately more interested in inheriting the fortune of the deceased. Hence, the right to die should not be legally and socially recognised and respected given the propensity for people to abuse it.

### **3. Respecting the right to die is a way of accepting the notion that some lives (ie. those who are stricken by illnesses) are worth less than others.**

Suffering is part of human life and could be a virtue in itself. Hence, if we were to expediently remove all sufferings from our lives since it is our so-called ‘right to die’, we would also be removing this virtue from our lives. People who insist on their right to die would therefore not only erode this virtue of perseverance from society, but would also label all who are stricken by illnesses to be lesser than the normal people, stereotyping them to be utterly useless to society. In reality, people who are plagued by chronic illnesses could in fact be a source of inspiration for others where instead of succumbing to pessimistic thoughts, they would fight to savour every second of their lives. Dr. Richard Teo Keng Siang, a millionaire cosmetic surgeon in Singapore who was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer in 2011, chose to be a source of inspiration and encouragement to cancer patients through his personal testimony in his Christian faith. Likewise, Canadian humanitarian Terry Fox did not use his cancer as an excuse to end his life, but chose to use his life story to start a series of social activism to help cancer patients.