INDIGO

Junior College
The Ultimate Exam Revision Notes

Syllabus 8881

General Paper

- Essay - 2021 A-Level Essay Dissection
- Comprehension - Paper 2 Revision
- SAQ & NITS

Struggling to score in GP?

At Indigo, we've analysed the patterns and we've decoded every GP question type into a 6-step structured approach that gives you certainty and prevents off-tangent answers. This revision notes will helps you confidently conquer both Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Start by reading our notes. Then, challenge yourself with the essay and questions. Every attempt brings you one step closer to your target grade.

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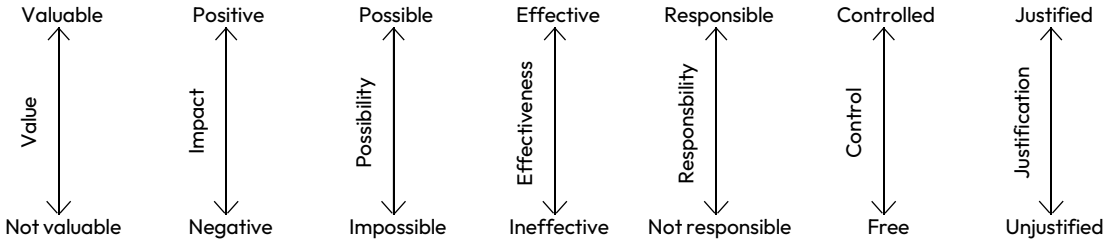
1. Essay

Essay Workshop 1/9: 2021 A Levels Essay Dissection

There are seven broad **polarities** explored in GP essays. The **poles** refer to the two ends of a spectrum that defines the range of possible responses, and the **polarity** refers to that axis:



Establishing the polarity correctly when planning and engaging it consistently while writing lets us answer the crux of each question head-on. Firstly, we need not approach each new question with fresh eyes; just as questions on the same **Topic** will have similarities, so too will questions with the same polarity, or **Issue**, so if we know how to answer one, we know how to answer all:

Given Question	Polarity
Does reading for pleasure still have a place today?	**Value** of X
Is the pursuit of success always desirable?	**Value** of X

This is all the more so for questions with the same Topic and Issue:

Given Question	Polarity
Are we allowing our love of tech to limit us?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
Has tech truly brought about a brighter future?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
How far is modern tech a cause for concern?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
In today's tech-driven age, traditional businesses are out of business. Discuss.	What is the **Impact** of tech?
Is a world without tech for better or worse?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
Is tech outpacing morality?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
Should tech be embraced or feared?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
'Tech has failed to make the world a safer place.' DYA?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
'Tech in healthcare has gone too far.' Is this fair?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
'Tech leads to environmental destruction.' DYA?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
'The future of arts is tech.' Discuss.	What is the **Impact** of tech?
TWE has tech affected people's quality of life?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
TWE has tech made it easier to make money?	What is the **Impact** of tech?
Will tech replace the role of humans in the future?	What is the **Impact** of tech?

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Secondly, this helps prevent us from writing off-tangent, because questions on the same Topic but different Issue have different arguments, different ways of asserting yes or no:

Given Question	Polarity
'Tech is overrated.' DYA?	**Value** of tech
Is religion still relevant in our technological age?	**Impact** of tech on X
How far can technology correct its own shortcomings?	**Possibility** of tech doing X
Is it necessarily true that tech ensures economic growth?	**Effectiveness** of tech in X
Should resources be allocated to tech development?	**Responsibility** of X toward tech
TWE should the tech industry be left unregulated?	**Control** of tech
Should tech breakthroughs be available to all countries?	**Justification** of tech

1. Value

- Diagnosis: About the desirability, importance, relevance, or significance of some entity or about it having a place or a point in the world.
- Prescription: Map the general, fixed functions of the entity in question to various, specific contexts in which it might find use. If there is a match between function and context, it has value; if there is a mismatch between function and context, it has no value.

Examples:

- 'Religion is an important part of the lives of young people today.' Consider whether this is true in your society. (2018 A Levels)
- Assess the importance of food within Singaporean culture. (2019 A Levels)

2. Impact

- Diagnosis: About the magnitude of change caused by some entity or about whether that change is net positive or negative in nature.
- Prescription: Map the disruptive features of the entity in question, or the disruptor, to how it caused a change in the status quo pre-disruptor versus post-disruptor. If the status quo has changed for the better, it has had a positive impact; if the status quo has changed for the worse, it has had a negative impact.

Examples:

- 'Longer life expectancy creates more problems than benefits.' Discuss. (2016 A Levels)
- How far has modern technology made it unnecessary for individuals to possess mathematical skills? (2016 A Levels)

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3. Possibility

- Diagnosis: About the attainability, feasibility, or plausibility of some future ideal, goal, or prospect or about whether some problem about the present is permanent in nature.
- Prescription: Enumerate the tasks on the to-do list to get from where we are to where we want to be, then evaluate the factors that help or hinder us in ticking off each task on the to-do list. If we have the means to tick off a task, it is possible; if we lack the means to tick off a task, it is impossible.

Examples:

- Assess the view that attempts to control climate change can never be truly effective. (2017 A Levels)
- In an age of rapid technological advancement, is a single career for life realistic? (2018 A Levels)

4. Effectiveness

- Diagnosis: About the extent to which some solution or strategy achieves some objective or addresses some problem.
- Prescription: Evaluate how well the entity in question works, in terms of not only whether it does the job, but also whether it does the job in all cases (reliability), in time (timeliness), once and for all (durability), by tackling the root of the issue (profundity), without making the wrong party pay (fairness), without wasting resources (cost-efficiency). If the solution in question does the job according to a relevant yardstick, it is effective; if the solution in question does not do the job according to a relevant yardstick, it is ineffective.

Examples:

- Scientific research into health and diet is unreliable as it so often contradicts itself.' Is this a fair comment? (2013 A Levels)
- Can fiction teach us anything meaningful about the real world? (2019 A Levels)

5. Responsibility

- Diagnosis: About the assignment of some duty, expectation, or onus to some stakeholder or about its apportioning between a few stakeholders.
- Prescription: Consider some relevant bases for determining responsibility using either a consequence-based logic, like the ability to create good outcomes, or a rule-based logic, like contractual obligations to be honoured, debts to be repaid, or rights to be respected. If a logic implicates the stakeholder in question, it is responsible for the task; if a logic does not implicate the stakeholder in question, it is not responsible for to the task.

Examples:

- 'Human need, rather than profit, should always be the main concern of scientific research.' Discuss. (A Levels 2016)
- Should both parents take equal responsibility for raising their children? (A Levels 2019)

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6. Control

- Diagnosis: About the amount of power authorities assert over some activity or area.
- Prescription: Compare the merits and demerits of control and the merits and demerits of its opposite, freedom. If there are merits to control and by corollary demerits to freedom, control is the answer; if there are merits to freedom and by corollary demerits to control, freedom is the answer.

Examples:

- Considering the money involved, should developing countries be allowed to host major sporting events? (2016 A Levels)
- Is regulation of the press desirable? (2017 A Levels)

7. Justification

- Diagnosis: About the acceptability, permissibility, or tolerability of some dubious entity.
- Prescription: Consider other polarities relevant for determining justifiability, such as the value of the entity in question, the effectiveness with which it fulfils its function, the impact it has, intended or unintended, when we switch from it to the next best alternative or vice versa, the responsibility of the stakeholder doing it, etc.

Examples:

- 'Works of art which have been removed from their country of origin should be returned.' Discuss. (2018 A Levels)
- How far should countries have relations with others whose human rights record is poor? (2019 A Levels)

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Task 1: Diagnosis

- Underline the T(opic), then tick in T if it is familiar and cross if it is unfamiliar.
- Using the VIPERCJ diagnosis notes, identify the Polarity, then fill the letter in **I(ssue)**.
- Underline any C(omplication), then tick in C if it is familiar and cross if it is unfamiliar.

#	Question	T	I	C
1.	How far is the pursuit of happiness the most important human goal?			
2.	'Scientific advancement breeds complacency.' How far do you agree?			
3.	'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true?			
4.	To what extent has social media devalued true friendship in your society?			
5.	To what extent is charitable giving desirable?			
6.	'Films are concerned with escaping from the problems of everyday life, rather than addressing them.' Discuss.			
7.	'What an individual eats or drinks should not be the concern of the state.' What is your view?			
8.	Is news today reliable?			
9.	'The arts are nothing more than a luxury.' How far is this true of your society?			
10.	'Staging major sporting events brings nothing but benefits to the host country.' Discuss.			
11.	Are global tourism and travel still necessary when everything can be experienced or achieved online?			
12.	'Advertising is largely about persuading people to buy what they do not need.' How far do you agree?			

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Task 2: Prescription

- Write an essay plan (three-four topic sentences) for the following questions.

'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true?	
To what extent is charitable giving desirable?	
Is news today reliable?	

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COMPREHENSION	PAPER 2 REVISION NOTES

GENERAL APPROACHES FOR P2

1. At the beginning of the paper

a) Look at the questions to get a gist of the discussion in the passages
b) Make reference to the paragraphs in question.
   - Engage the 'Before and After' rule when reading for question.

2. When doing questions

a) Identify the focus for each question
b) Identify the argument/ point of discussion in each question
c) Identify what the question requires of you
   - A Levels 2023: Why does the author describe the taking and sharing of photographs as 'an amazing privilege'?
   - A Levels 2019: Explain three ways in which the author uses language to criticise the zoos' use of animals for 'the amusement of our species'.

3. Rules for all questions regardless of question types

a) Use **TULIP** every single time

FOR EVERY SAQ QUESTION, IDENTIFY	
1. Type	Identify the question type and employ the specific answering techniques to answer accordingly.
2. UYOWAFAP	All questions require you to **u**se **y**our **o**wn **w**ords **a**s **f**ar **a**s **p**ossible. If it is explicitly stated in the question, it means that your answer can be found in the passage. If it is not explicitly stated, your answer STILL can be found in the passage but it means you will need to draw some inference to answer the question.
3. Location	1. e.g (**Line** 2): answer found in the lines stipulated or line before/ after. 2. e.g. (**Paragraph** 2): answer is found in the greater paragraph. Use synonyms of word in question to locate your answer. 3. e.g (**Subject noun)**: When asked about a particular time period (industrial revolution), sportswomen, locate the relevant discussion in the text.
4. Indicated Marks	They indicate the number of points you need to find and paraphrase and how long you should spend on each question: • 1 mark= 1-2 points • 2 marks= 2-3 points • 3 marks= 3 -4 points or 3 PAIRS of points Allocate 2 mins for every 1 mark.
5. Proper Reference	Always paraphrase the references from the text in the question.

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SAQ & NITS

1. Pure Inference (Authorial Technique)

Diagnosis:

a. Question asks about the author's intent, or intended implication.
b. Question refers to some rhetorical, stylistic, or typographical choice.
c. Question suggests that the author did not have to make that choice, but did.

A Level Examples:

- A Levels 2014: What are the purposes of the author's opening question?
- A Levels 2015: Why has the author written "performance-enhancing substances" in inverted commas?
- A Levels 2016: Why do you think the author switches to "we" in the final paragraph?
- A Levels 2019: Why does the author choose to express the rate of deforestation as being "the equivalent of 36 football pitches a minute"?

Prescription:

1. Hold the point constant and focus on the way the point was made—why use this technique instead of any other technique, or why not omit it completely?
2. The first mark involves the acontextual**, generic, or standard function** of the choice. For example, no matter the passage, italics are always used for emphasis. This step typically requires a verb e.g. "agree," "highlight," unless a verb is provided e.g. "imply," "suggest."
3. The second mark involves the **context-specific function** of that choice. For example, while italicisation always creates emphatic effect, you still need to explain what exactly is being emphasised and why the author wants to emphasise that.

Common subtypes:

- Anecdotes
  - For personal, relatable, or understandable exemplification or illustration.
  - E.g. Last Monday, I found myself on the MRT, yet again, staring into the abyss of the rails getting swallowed up metre after metre by the advancing train. We've all been there, that moment of dissociation, where we wonder if an endless reprise of the life we have, the life we've always lived, is all we have to look forward to until the sweet release of death.
  - Note: This is often used to **start a passage**, in which case it engages the reader's attention and also establishes what the rest of the passage will discuss.

- Boldface or italics
  - For emphasis.
  - E.g. An exam-centric system makes us believe it is not about the process, but the product.

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Callbacks
- For addressing unanswered questions, closing loops, or tying up loose ends.
- E.g. [Assume that this is the last paragraph of a passage that started with Icarus' story.] Hubris is, therefore, inalienable from human nature. If we can find empathy for Icarus as he shoots for the stars, we can forgive ourselves when we try and fail at the same.
- Note: This is often used to **end a passage**, in which case it reaffirms the main, overall point that the author began the passage asserting.

- Capitalisation of common nouns
- For bestowing upon an entity some larger-than-life, objective, or official status.
- E.g. Cancel culture is such that whatever the Mob says, one obeys.

- Ellipses
- For dramatic tension and an anti-climax e.g. The answer to our all woes is… optimism.
- For emphasis of a final list item e.g. He is a boss, a father, a teacher… and a killer.
- For emphasis of a long list e.g. Parents must discipline, inspire, love, mentor, provide…

- Examples
- For evidence, illustration, and substantiation.
- If there is only one example, that specific example is what illustrates the author's point e.g. a credible character like Confucius, a relatable reference like a football field.
- If there is more than one example, the scope or span might be what illustrates the author's point e.g. something is true across space, something is true across time, something is true for better or for worse.

- Inverted commas
- For indicating that the enclosed text should not be taken at face value as the author's own opinion, typically for disagreement, irony, or scepticism.
- E.g. "Charismatic" politicians like Trump often use their influence for self-enrichment.

- Parentheses
- For including additional, incidental, or tangential information.
- E.g. Even if the policy pays o" in economic terms (and indeed it has), one wonders if the environmental toll it took was worth it.

- Personal pronouns
- For collective, shared, or universal accountability, association, or relevance if the number changes from singular to plural e.g. "I…" to "We need to act before it is too late."
- For personally addressing, calling on, or calling out the reader if the person changes from first to person, e.g. "I" to "You wouldn't want to still be here in ten years' time."

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- Rhetorical questions

  - For emphasising that a given point is a foregone conclusion.
  - E.g. What hope has a fish if we appraise it by its ability to climb a tree?
  - Note: Non-rhetorical questions do not have an obvious answer. When author asks a non- rhetorical question, the reader is genuinely intended to mull over its answer, and its effect is thus to spark curiosity, interest, or thought.

2. Pure Inference (Language Use)

Diagnosis:

a. Question asks about the author's intent, or intended implication.
b. Question refers to some lexical or linguistic choice.
c. Question suggests that the author did not have to make that choice, but did.

A Level Examples:

- A Levels 2015: What is the author suggesting by writing 'such advances may seep rather than cascade down'?
- A Levels 2016: Explain the author's use of the phrase 'what is even worse'.
- A Levels 2017: What does the author suggest about the opening statement by referring to it as a 'truism'?
- A Levels 2018: Explain the author's use of the word 'presages'.
- A Levels 2019: What does the author mean by calling the reintroduction of endangered species into the wild 'much-vaunted and self-justificatory'?
- A Levels 2021: Why does the author use the word 'colossal' to describe the cost of polyester to the natural environment?

Prescription:

1. Hold the point constant and focus on the way the point was made—why use this phrase or word instead of any other phrase or word, or why not omit it completely?
2. The first mark involves the **acontextual, conventional, or literal meaning** of the choice. For example, no matter the passage, "colossal" always means big. This step typically requires a verb e.g. "agree," "highlight," unless a verb is provided e.g. "imply," "suggest."
3. The second mark involves the **context-specific, metaphorical, or unconventional meaning** of that choice. For example, while "colossal" always emphasises largeness, you still need to explain in what sense exactly it is large and why the author wants to emphasise that.

Common subtypes:

- Sometimes, the language choice draws on a familiar, often-used literary device. In these cases, we can rely on our experience with such devices.
  - Irony: 1m for expectation, 1m for reality
  - Metaphor / simile: 1m for literal meaning, 1m for metaphorical meaning

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- Paradox: 1m for starting point, 1m for contradictory ending point

- Other times, the language choice involves a specifically-chosen phrase or word. In these cases, we must rely on our own vocabulary (or guess its meaning from its context).

3. Paraphrase

Diagnosis:

a. Question asks about the author's arguments,
b. explanations for those arguments,
c. or examples of those arguments.
d. If there is a quote, it refers to a point, and is not linguistically interesting.

A Level Examples:

- A Levels 2017: Identify two examples I of how online services are 'monetized'.
- A Levels 2018: What reasons does the author suggest as to why 'millennials do not see voting as a duty'?
- A Levels 2020: What is surprising about Michael Wenzel's research on people who apologise?
- A Levels 2021: According to the author, what is the impact of the "tyranny of fashion"?
- A Levels 2022: Explain three criticisms the author makes about smartphone users.
- A Levels 2023: Why does the author describe the taking and sharing of photographs as 'an amazing privilege'?

Prescription:

1. If a quote is provided as reference, hunt it down. If no quote is provided as reference, hunt down a paraphrase of it.
2. Find the argument, explanation, or example the question is asking for.

- Often, the answer is in the immediate context (left or right) of the reference. Remember, authors usually write in a P-E-E-L structure too.
- Use punctuation marks (e.g. colons, dashes) and signposts (e.g. but, in addition to) to find the answer and figure out when to start and when to stop.

3. Paraphrase all keywords in the relevant part.

- Ensure the main idea is captured instead of just doing a 1-for-1 word replacement.
- If a quote is provided as reference, paraphrase it as well to be safe.

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4. Hybrid

Diagnosis:

a. Question asks about "how," i.e. in what sense (How are you the right man for the job?),
b. using what means (How did you get an A for GP?),
c. or through which steps (How do you bake a cake?).
d. Question refers to a content point, and contains two parts—how X does / is Y.

A Level Examples:

- A Levels 2018: How does the author suggest that the attitudes of millennials towards voting may change in the future?
- A Levels 2019: How does the author support her claim that vain rulers used animals "to bolster their prestige and show their dominance"?
- A Levels 2020: How I does the author suggest that apologies can encourage reappraisal of the past?
- A Levels 2022: Explain how businesspeople display 'trademarks of the narcissist'.
- A Levels 2023: Explain how the author illustrates the difficulty of defining photography ethics.

Prescription:

1. Infer which parts of the passage are relevant.
2. Paraphrase the relevant parts.

Common subtypes:

- Content: pity points (in what sense?)
  - X is some entity or example, Y is some point about X.
  - Infer which content details were given by the author about X make it Y.

- Content: proof (using what means?)
  - X is the author's example or evidence, Y is the author's point.
  - Infer which content details were given by the author to lead the reader to Y.

- Content: process (through which steps?)
  - X is the starting point, Y is the ending point
  - Infer which content details were given by the author to go from X to Y.

- Language
  - This is a subtype that looks similar ("how") but is completely different.
  - Its diagnosis involves a reference to a linguistic effect, not a content point.
  - Its prescription involves inferring what linguistic choices were made by the author to make that linguistic effect, thus this can be thought of as a reversed type 1 or 2 question.

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A Level Examples:

- A Levels 2019: Explain three ways in which the author uses language to criticise the zoos' use of animals for 'the amusement of our species'.
- A Levels 2020: In the opening paragraph, the author presents herself as a person who apologises too much. In doing this, how does she try to engage the interest of the reader?
- A Levels 2021: Explain two ways in which the author indicates their disapproval of social media influencers.
- A Levels 2023: How does the author's use of language convey their criticism of those who manipulate photographs?

5. Comparison

Diagnosis:

a. Question asks about parallels or similarities,
b. or contrasts or differences.

A Level Examples:

- A Levels 2014: What similarity does the author see between the effects of the invention of the printing press and the development of the internet?
- A Levels 2015: Give two differences between play and sport that the author suggests.
- A Levels 2016: What distinctions does the author draw between those who travelled in the eighteenth century and some of 'today's gap-year students'?
- A Levels 2017: What contrasts does the author make about the role played by the users of the internet services?
- A Levels 2018: What distinctions does the author draw between the way in which old people and young workers are treated by some policies?
- A Levels 2020: What contrasts does the author make between the attitudes of men and women towards apologising?
- A Levels 2022: What contrast does the author make between the possible consequences of smartphone users being distracted?

Prescription:

1. Infer the basis, dimension, or spectrum of comparison.
- If two things are similar, they are two instances of the same thing.
- If two things are dissimilar, they are two opposing poles on the same axis.

2. Paraphrase the relevant similarities or dissimilarities.
- If two things are similar, your answer should go, "X and Y are both [same thing]."
- If two things are dissimilar, your answer should go, "X is [one pole] while Y is [other pole]."

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6. NITs (New Item Types)

- **Step 1** is to (k)**now** what the point cited from passage 1 or 2 means. Just as the essays you write have an overall agenda or angle, so too do the passages you read; just as you make specific points in your essays to advance your argument, so too do the passages you read.
  - Perhaps the point establishes cause and effect. Perhaps it evaluates the effectiveness of a solution relative to a problem. Perhaps it entrusts a responsibility to a stakeholder.
  - In all cases, each specific point is part of the passage's overall argument.

- **Step 2** is to **identify** a point in passage 3 that is relevant to the point cited from passage 1 or 2. At this juncture, bear in mind that passage 3's point must relate not just to the overall argument (e.g. that fast fashion is bad for the environment), but to the specific point (e.g. that fast fashion is bad for the environment because of the types of fabric used).
  - Before even looking at passage 3, it helps to understand what the point in passages 1 or 2 relies on, and hence how it might theoretically be supported or undermined.

- **Step 3** is to **tell** it in your words. This gets you your first mark.
  - Explain, reduce, simplify, or unpack the identified point in a way that makes the point clear. Never paraphrase for the sake of paraphrasing and lose the essence of the point.

- **Step 4** is to **show** how the identified point supports or undermines the cited point. This gets you your second mark.
  - Perhaps the identified point points out that a key premise is untrue. Perhaps it provides an alternative account. Perhaps it punctures the cause-and-effect chain. Or perhaps it does the exact opposite. A fuller list of strategies to support or undermine is included below.

	Support	**Undermine**
Whether it is true	Demonstration, evidence, example, illustration, or proof of the conclusion	Demonstration, evidence, example, illustration, or proof of the conclusion's opposite
Why it is true	Explanation of the basis, rationale, or reason behind the conclusion	Demonstration, evidence, example, illustration, or proof of a premise's opposite
How it is true	Elaboration on the mechanism, pathway, or process behind the conclusion	Logical contradiction, gap, invalidity, or leap between premise and conclusion

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Answers:

No.	Question	Dissection
1.	How far is the pursuit of happiness the most **important** human goal?	
	• **Polarity:** "Important" can be interpreted as having Value.	Value
	• **Topic:** General / happiness • **Issue:** The pursuit of happiness is the most important human goal vs. the pursuit of happiness is not the most important human goal.	
	• "Pursuit of happiness" – Discuss the Functions of happiness relative to relevant Contexts e.g. different cultural norms, different stages in life, different types of people…	
	• "Most" – To agree, a point must show that the pursuit of happiness is the be-all-end-all, the ultimate goal of life i.e. if we achieve it, not achieving other goals would not even matter; if we do not achieve it, achieving other goals would not even matter. To disagree, show that it is not necessary or sufficient for a well-lived life.	Superlative
	• It is assumed that the pursuit of happiness is an important goal.	Presupposition
2.	'Scientific advancement **breeds complacency**.' How far do you agree?	
	• **Polarity:** "Breeds" can be interpreted as causing a certain effect.	Impact
	• **Topic:** Science • **Issue:** Scientific advancement increases complacency vs. scientific advancement does not increase / decreases complacency.	
	• "Scientific advancement" – Discuss the defining characteristics of science to unpack the Disruptor (e.g. it gives knowledge about the world, it grants us the means to take control of our fate…) relative to the Change in the Status Quo, our attitudes towards our abilities, entitlements, future, power, status…	

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3.	'Power **these days** lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true? • **Polarity:** "These days", or the modern era, can be interpreted as a Disruptor that causes a Change in the Status Quo. • **Topic:** (Political) power • **Issue:** Recent developments have made the people more powerful than politicians vs. recent developments have not made the people politicians more powerful than politicians. • "Power" – The balance of power, the ability of one party to change the course of the world or the other party's actions, is the aspect of the Status Quo that has changed over time. Discuss the defining characteristics of today's era (e.g. conflict-ridden, democratic, educated, realistic) to unpack the Disruptor. • "More… than" – Comparison needed. Each paragraph must focus on a certain aspect of modernity and discuss not just how that has made one party more powerful or one party less powerful, but how it has changed the distribution of power in society.	Impact Comparison
4.	To what extent has social media **devalued** true friendship in your society? • **Polarity:** "Devalued" can be interpreted as being about the change in Value of friendship in a social media age, or about the Impact of social media on friendship. • **Topic:** Social media **Issue:** Social media has devalued friendship in Singapore vs. social media has not devalued the value of friendship in Singapore. • "True friendship" – Friendship needs to be defined clearly to clarify how true friends differ from superficial ones. Discuss the Functions of friendship (e.g. for assistance, companionship, entertainment) relative to the Context of a social media age. The role of friendship can also be the aspect of the Status Quo that changes over time. Discuss the defining characteristics of social media (e.g. dynamic, fast-moving, profit-driven, virtual) to unpack the Disruptor. • "In your society" – Discuss relevant aspects of Singaporean society as part of the Context (e.g. conservative, pragmatic, tech-savvy).	Value / Impact Given context

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5.	To what extent is charitable giving **desirable**? • **Polarity:** "Desirable" can be interpreted as having Value. • **Topic:** Charity • **Issue:** Charity is desirable vs. charity is not desirable. • "Charitable giving" – Discuss the Functions of charity (e.g. meeting long- or short-term, tangible or intangible, needs of the donor or donee) relative to relevant Contexts it takes place in (e.g. directly or through charity organisations, intranational or international).	Value
6.	'Films are **concerned with** escaping from the problems of everyday life, rather than addressing them.' Discuss. • **Polarity:** "Concerned with" can be interpreted as being about the Functions of film that give it its Value. • **Topic:** Art / film • **Issue:** The function of films is to escape, not address, problems vs. the function of films is to address, not / and also escape, problems. • "Films" – Take the filmmakers' point of view, as "concern" suggests that the intended Function of films is the focus, not the incidental Functions their audience derives from them. Discuss them relative to the Context of today (e.g. complex, globalised, progressive), or the everyday problems that plague us today. • "Rather than" – Comparison needed. Each paragraph must focus on not just one function or the other, in isolation, but a reason why the value of film derives from one function and not the other.	Value Comparison

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7.	'What an individual eats or drinks should not be the **concern** of the state.' What is your view? • **Polarity:** "Concern" can be interpreted as being about the right or the responsibility of the state to step in, as opposed to the individual having the right or the responsibility to make their own decisions. • **Topic:** Governance / personal freedom • **Issue:** The state has the right / responsibility to concern itself with its citizens' diet vs. the state has no right / responsibility to concern itself with its citizens' diet. • "The state" – Discuss what is not OK for a government to do, what is OK but not obligated, and what is obligated. • "Eats or drinks" – Discuss how this domain of activity impinges upon the considerations above (e.g. If governments should step in when the society's well-being is at stake, does one's diet affect society's well-being? If governments should step away when their citizens' human rights are at risk, does one's diet implicate rights like bodily autonomy or freedom of conscience?). Do not split them up.	Responsibility / Control
8.	Is news **today** reliable? • **Polarity:** "Today" can be interpreted as a Disruptor that causes a Change in the Status Quo. • **Topic:** Media / news • **Issue:** The news today is reliable vs. the news today is not reliable. • "Reliable" – The reliability of the news, its ability to convey a full and factual account of reality, is the aspect of the Status Quo that has changed over time. Discuss the defining characteristics of today's era (e.g. polarised, populist, profit-driven) to unpack the Disruptor.	Impact

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9.	'The arts are nothing more than a **luxury**.' How far is this true of your society?	
	• **Polarity:** "Luxury" can be interpreted as having Value only to the rich, or only when one's basic needs have been fulfilled.	Value
	• **Topic:** Arts • **Issue:** The arts is only a luxury in Singapore vs. the arts can also be a necessity, not only a luxury, in Singapore.	
	• "The arts" - Discuss the Functions of the arts (e.g. to influence, to inform, to unite, to uplift) relative to relevant Contexts (e.g. poor and rich individuals, good and bad times).	
	• "Nothing more than" – Absolute statement. To agree, a point must show that there is something about art that makes it inherently and hence invariably a luxury. To disagree, show the exceptions to the norm by considering different cases and Contexts.	Absolute
	• "In your society" – Discuss relevant aspects of Singaporean society as part of the Context (e.g. affluent, pragmatic, post-material).	Given context
10.	'Staging major sporting events brings nothing but **benefits** to the host country.' Discuss.	
	• **Polarity:** Bringing "benefits" can be interpreted as having Value or as having a positive Impact.	Value / Impact
	• **Topic:** Sports • **Issue:** Staging major sporting events is only beneficial vs. staging major sporting events is not only beneficial.	
	• "Sporting events" – Discuss the defining characteristics of sports and sporting events to unpack the Disruptor, or the Functions (e.g. resource-intensive, universally relatable, visually spectacular).	
	• "Host country" - Discuss the relevant aims or aspects of a country to unpack the Change in the Status Quo, or the Context (e.g. its economic situation, political standing, social unity).	
	• "Nothing but" – Absolute statement. To agree, a point must show that there is something about sports that makes it inherently and invariably beneficial. To disagree, show the exceptions to the norm by considering different cases and Contexts.	Absolute

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11.	Are global tourism and travel still **necessary** when everything can be experienced or achieved online? • **Polarity:** "Necessary" can be interpreted as having infinitely great Value. This can also be about the Impact of today's digital age on the necessity of global travel. • **Topic:** Digitalisation / travel • **Issue:** Global travel is still necessary in spite of today's digital age / all the more necessary precisely because of today's digital age vs. global travel is no longer necessary because of today's digital age. • "Global tourism and travel" – Discuss the Functions of global travel (e.g. education, employment, enjoyment) relative to the explicitly-given Context of today's digital age. Do not split them up. • "Still… when…" – Explicit condition that cannot be contested. It is a given that we are now living in a digital age where everything can be experienced or achieved online, extreme as that sounds. • It is assumed that global travel was necessary in the past.	Value / Impact Explicit condition Presupposition
12.	'Advertising is largely **about** persuading people to buy what they do not need.' How far do you agree? • **Polarity:** "About" can be interpreted as being about the Functions of advertising that give it its Value. • **Topic:** Advertising / media • **Issue:** Persuading people to buy things they do not need is the main function of advertising vs. persuading people to buy things they do not need is not the main function of advertising. • "Advertising" – Take the advertisers' point of view to focus on the intended Function of advertisements, not the incidental Functions they derived along the way. Discuss them relative to the Context of today (e.g. capitalist, competitive, media-saturated).	Value

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Task 2: Prescription

- Write an essay plan (three-four topic sentences) for the following questions.

'Power these days lies more with the people than the politicians.' To what extent is this true?	
To what extent is charitable giving desirable?	
Is news today reliable?	

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4. Essay

Is news today reliable?

Topic	News media
Issue	How has today's world made the news reliable or unreliable?
Assumption	There is something about today's world, as opposed to yesterday's world, that has affected the reliability of news, possibly negatively.
Comment	**"Today"** – This is an "Impact" question, which requires students to consider the ways in which various aspects of today's world, or various forces operative in the 21st century, has affected, or is affecting, the reliability of news.
Keywords	**"News"** – Accounts, coverage, information, reports of current events. **"Reliable"** – Accurate, dependable, full, impartial, objective, valid.
Opinion	No

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Introduction

An old saying, variations of which have existed since the 1700s, goes: "A lie will get halfway around the world before the truth can finish getting its boots on." Today's highly developed and digitalised world christened the "Information Age" or the "Internet Age," ironically embodies this truism. The age-old race between fact and fiction has only become less favourable to the former as the advent of smartphones and social media has led to the rise of deceit and divisiveness in the news, making it harder and harder to depend on it for complete, clearheaded reporting on current events. While idealists argue that the greater amount of information now available in the news is a boon overall, and that efforts are in place to protect the general public from its banes, the more realistic view is that the news today is, unfortunately, more unreliable than it is reliable.

Possible Arguments

Learning Point!☝

"Impact" questions need us to unpack both sides: the cause, or **disruptor**, and the effect, or **change in status quo**. Sometimes students neglect one or the other. For example, some may think that "reliability" is just reliability, and not realise that it can be unpacked into accuracy, completeness, objectivity, etc., while others may fail to realise that "today" can be unpacked as well into trends like democratisation, education, technological advancement, etc. Identify how the following topic sentences break down the two keywords.

From an idealistic point of view, the news today seems reliable...

1. **The democratic ethos of the media today welcomes the participation of ordinary citizens, liberating us from the opaque, oppressive interests of monopolistic news institutions and letting us piece together a picture of the world that is freer, fuller—and more reliable.**

- In the past, whether an occurrence made the news or not was largely determined by whether enough journalists were in the office that day and interested in writing a piece on it.
- Next, if a reporter were to pick up a scoop, its angle, literal or metaphorical, depended on how they penned the piece or where the photographer pointed the camera. Facts from the ground were filtered through many layers of copywriters and editors, who had the liberty to remove or reword information as they saw fit, typically with a certain party's interest in mind.
- In states with authoritarian tendencies,[5] that party would be politicians keen to paint the ruling regime in a positive light; in states that did not meddle with the media, that party would be the profit-making media outfits concerned with market forces and the money that brought in.
- As a result of this subjective, almost arbitrary process, the final product that reached readers would often, whether by baleful or benign intent, present but a partial picture of events.
- However, in the present, the media scene has become more democratic: a greater variety of news sources inform people's opinions, and a greater variety of public opinions in turn inform

[5] Watch: How do our local journalists feel about censorship?
https://www.tiktok.com/@thesingaporeanson/video/7143077478171528450

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the news. Individuals armed with no more than a connection to the internet and a case to make are able to speak on and share goings-on through pages on WordPress, podcasts on Spotify, or posts on Twitter with one another rather than sit tight waiting for professionals to do so.

- The line between consumer and producer of news has been further blurred by the mainstream outlets too, which are embracing "citizen journalism" by incorporating the grainy footage shot by amateurs and grouchy rants on social media platforms as sources for their stories.
- ➢ The democratisation of the media and diversification of the material that reaches audiences seem to have increased the reliability of the news. Any one point contributed by any random netizen in today's context is ipso facto as skewed or subjective as any one piece composed by any random newsperson in yesterday's context, but by combining the many opinions out there on the many broad-based, open, participatory platforms in use today, we can now see more sides to unfolding events and settle on a more nuanced view overall on each of them.
- At the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in China, citizen journalist Zhang Zhan travelled to Wuhan to report on the situation at the epicentre of the outbreak right after it was placed under lockdown. In early 2020, when China was trying to distort and downplay the severity of the spread and dictate the narrative surrounding its crisis management skill, Zhang uploaded dozens of videos shot on her phone to YouTube, showing what life was like there.
- These clips included shots of a crematorium where bodies—presumably of the infected—were being burned, and a confrontation at a police station where she queried authorities about the case of a doctor who had been reprimanded for trying to sound the alarm over the outbreak.
- ➢ Her videos allowed the rest of the world to see a side of the pandemic that Beijing did not want them to see, and that state-controlled news outlets—the only sources of news that would exist were it not for today's digitalised age—were not allowed to report on.
- Even earlier on in the digital age, these platforms showed promise as means to mobilise mass dissent. During the Arab Spring of 2010, for instance, thousands sent footage of the chaos on the ground, shot on their smartphones, to trustworthy media outlets like Al Jazeera, as well as posted it on the web—which censorship laws had yet to penetrate.
- Aside from giving people around the world an accurate idea of what was happening in a time characterised by confusion and conflicting narratives, the material gave rise to investigations into crimes committed by the state, which would otherwise be able to exploit its control of both media and military to suppress the masses. For instance, in the Egyptian revolution, amateur footage showed a tank firing on a school, which was found to be housing escaped prisoners.
- In another case, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt claimed that a photo of a female protester getting stripped and stomped on was fake. Again, amateur footage of the atrocity later emerged, forcing the council to admit that the incident had indeed occurred.

- The importance of having as many cameras pointing in as many directions as possible in order to triangulate the most objective account possible was spelt out by Faris Couri, chief editor of BBC Arabic: "On the rare occasion journalists got access to Syria, they were accompanied by

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the authorities, so the unrestricted user content balanced the coverage… people realised the situation demands this and it's impossible to rely on professionals."

- While most obvious in authoritarian states that traditionally limit press freedom, the merits of new media can be seen in democratic countries like the US too. In 2014, after black teenager Michael Brown was lethally shot by the police, rapper TheePharoah live-tweeted his reaction to the incident in real-time as it occurred outside his home and posted a photo of Brown's body afterwards, garnering many horrified reactions online.
- The massive outrage precipitated the Ferguson Unrest later that year, which witnessed many more cases of ordinary citizens uploading footage of the protests—and the police's response, which was criticised for being excessively heavy-handed—online for all to see.
- In one case, postgraduate student Mustafa Hussein's livestream of the protests drew over 1.3 million views, with commenters applauding him for doing a better job than local media, which was biased in blowing out of proportion the scenes of looting by some protestors.[6]

➢ The democratisation of the media, powered by advances in information and communications technology, has allowed ordinary citizens to share their side of a story as it unfolds. This avails a wider range of options to citizens deciding which news source to tune in to.

➢ Not only are there more options in a quantitative sense, but this also makes for a fairer, fuller understanding overall in a qualitative sense, now that the official press is complemented by—or competing with—ordinary citizens with no agenda other than to get the word out there.

➢ Katie Hawkins-Gaar, editor of CNN iReport, states, "Journalism has been forever changed—I'd argue for the better—thanks to the fact that people can interact with media organisations and share their opinions, personal stories, and photos and videos of news as it happens."

➢ Under this view, today's news can be relied upon.

2. Developments in today's digitalised world have prompted state and non-state authorities to intervene via platforms and policies that ensure the veracity of news content by holding those generating it to a higher standard.

- Institutions, both private and public, have grown aware that the sheer amount of news flowing around the internet and filtering into people's apps in today's "Information Age" is not always a good thing: it is difficult to tell what the truth is, to tease out chatbots made out to be humans or charlatans masquerading as experts, when one is bombarded by content every minute.
- The risks have prompted companies to introduce fact-checking services and governments to impose laws, both of which aim to stem the flow of falsehoods, which means the credibility of the news as an institution has held firm despite the changes the digital age has introduced.

➢ At an individual level, we now have the means to cross-check all tales that flow into our feeds before buying whole-heartedly into them; at a societal level, we now have the mechanisms to deter liars from lying, or to punish them and purge their pollutive influence on public discourse if they proceed regardless. These new developments might thus keep the news reliable.

- For example, in 2016,[7] in response to the rising amount of misinformation percolating through its site, Facebook introduced a function that allowed users to report hoaxes, and even enabled them to flag stories as "disputed." Reports are sent to third-party fact checking organisations (signatories of Poynter's International Fact Checking Code of Principles) for verification, and stories that fail their tests appear lower on newsfeeds, accompanied by a warning and link to an article explaining to the user why the information is false.

[6] https://news.northeastern.edu/2014/08/20/3qs-citizen-journalism-in-ferguson/

[7] https://www.cnbc.com/2016/12/30/read-all-about-it-the-biggest-fake-news-stories-of-2016.html

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- This was boosted in 2020 when Reuters, the world's largest multimedia news provider, joined Facebook's fact-checking programme to aid it in combating the "growing issue" of fake news. Under this partnership, Reuters would evaluate the authenticity of user-generated media like photos, videos, and other content, and expose its findings to the public for interested netizens to determine whether any given piece of news is fact or fiction.
- Separately, in 2018, Reuters also launched e-learning courses to teach newsrooms to identify fake audio and visual content before they unwittingly propagated it in the mainstream media.
- Governments have also taken decisive action to crack down on fake news in recognition of the ever-increasing amount of (mis)information available online. For example, in 2019, Singapore passed the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act, empowering authorities to force parties to rectify or rescind, via a Correction Order, news they publish that is deemed to be false. Such censorship could also prevent Singaporeans from accessing the false claims.
- The law was used on several occasions during the COVID-19 period to forcibly prevent people from posting fake and potentially fatal claims espousing pseudo-cures or eroding public faith in the vaccine. The news consumed by Singaporeans during the pandemic was more reliable than it might have been were it not for the existence of the law.[8]

➢ While there are legitimate concerns about reliability in the Information Age, where fake news indistinguishable from real news has permeated the media, we should not resign ourselves to its distortions and deceit and arraign the news as unreliable tout court.

➢ There have been effective attempts by public and private institutions to fight back, arming us with new-and-improved means and mechanisms through which misinformation can be sieved out, scrutinised, and scrubbed, assuaging our concerns.

➢ There is thus cause to believe that the news remains as reliable today as ever.

Unfortunately, such a view is overly optimistic, and underestimates the threat posed by various developments in recent years. From a realistic point of view, the news today is not reliable...

3. The dispersed, decentralised nature of today's news media—with verified and unverified sources, credible and discreditable commentators coexisting side by side—makes it tough for the public to depend on the news for factual reports of reality.

- In the past, news was the exclusive product of official media outfits. Their institutional nature meant there was a proper way of doing things: news reporters were held to high standards of integrity, and the news itself were put through a rigorous process where all sources were fact-checked and all stories were filtered through multiple edits before they saw the light of day.
- Of course, tabloids existed back then too, but they had a reputation for being untrustworthy, and again their institutional nature—we were dealing with the likes of The Sunday Times and The Sun, not anonymous accounts on TikTok and Twitter—enabled the general population to gauge the credibility of those news outlets before gorging themselves on their offerings.

➢ These days, however, with the democratisation of the media and the dissolution of an industry once made up of only big firms and big names, the distinction between fact and opinion, news and gossip, reliable and unreliable has become rather unclear.

➢ Uninitiated, untrained citizens may have been elevated by digital technologies from consumer of news to its purveyor and publisher as well, but our empowerment has not been followed by a nascent sense of responsibility towards our newfound influence. We are quick to share news in the form of exciting shots, snippets, and soundbites we see on social media and messaging

[8] https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/PM-Lee-Doorstop-Interview-at-NCID

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platforms without verifying them first, which are then re-shared by peers just as ignorant and irrepressible as us—a vicious cycle that propagates across of society "news" that in an earlier era would never have made it out of a newsroom.

➢ Thus, the reliability of the news has been hampered by the thoughtless actions of citizens and commentators clogging it up with distorted, dubious, or downright counterfactual accounts.

- In Singapore, false information circulated as "news" from unknown sources has resulted in the doxxing and disturbance of innocent individuals mistakenly identified by online vigilantes.
- For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, an Indian lady was caught on video declining to put on a mask and declaring she was a "sovereign" who was above local laws. Netizens rushed to pinpoint the location of the incident as Shunfu Mart, as well as the woman in question as Ms Tuhina Singh, CEO of digital securities firm Propine. Several Facebook pages, including some styled as "alternative news" sites, along with forum users, released Ms Singh's personal details online, prompting a string of racist and xenophobic comments against her.
- Subsequently, a viral video in January 2022 showed a Bentley driver threatening to run over a security guard with his car outside Red Swastika school. In the course of naming and shaming the man, netizens wrongly identified him as Mr Neo Tiam Ting, a car dealership director, and proceeded to leak his private information on chat groups and online. Mr Neo was besieged by 200 calls and messages from angry strangers, while articles on unverified news sites filled up with rude comments about him from netizens. His business was also dragged into the matter.
- In the US, a rumour circulated online in 2016 led to a man bursting into a pizza restaurant and opening fire with an assault rifle because he had been led by disinformation sites to think that the restaurant was the nexus of a child sex trafficking ring. This "Pizzagate" conspiracy theory had been designed to discredit Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, and was popularised by Russian bots and the clueless, credulous Trump voters they preyed on.
- The US' experience with COVID-19 also involved an onslaught of false "miracle cures" for the coronavirus being promoted and peddled on alternative news websites, messaging apps, and social media, none of which can be regulated as stringently as the news institutions of old.
- In the early days, chlorine and colloidal silver were in vogue, not only delegitimising real ways to minimise the spread of the virus but also directly damaging the health of those who fell for it. Assistant professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto Abdu Sharkawy thus said, "The potential to spread information rapidly really exists through social media… but some people with little background in science or health care [anoint] themselves as experts and give people advice. It's very damaging and hasn't helped at all."
- Even after such myths were repeatedly debunked by doctors actually in the know, new myths sprang up in their place—the most infamous being the claim that Ivermectin, a medicine used to treat parasitic worm infections in horses, could cure COVID-19. Such right-wing campaigns had counterparts in Singapore as well, such as truthwarriors.info, which contrary to its name pushed the narrative that vaccines were ineffective.
- One of the Singaporeans bamboozled by this "news" was 65-year-old retiree Wong Lee Tak, who hoarded over 9,000 Ivermectin pills and was hospitalised after consuming four of them.

➢ It is impossible to dispute that these cases of rampant misinformation spread over the Internet only occurred, or only did the damage it did, due to the way news media has evolved to include a variety of voices. Malicious actors who would previously have been prevented by regulations from having a platform now have all the online presence and pull they want; misguided actors who would previously never have gotten onto a news channel or column now have a platform to commentate on matters they know nothing or worse than nothing about.

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- For all that fact checkers and fake news legislation do to combat misinformation, they are far better at regulating institutions than individuals who in their own little ways spread falsehoods that fly under the radar. As new media continues to open up more and more opportunities for the layperson to take part in public discourse, the challenge will only get greater and greater.
- As such, with misinformation spreading like wildfire in modern-day media, it is indeed difficult for people to rely on the gossip, lies, opinions, and rumours that dress themselves as the news.

4. The worry is not just that the news itself is unreliable, but also that what we see of the news is unreliable; new technologies have decimated objectivity and deprived us of the balanced accounts we need to reliably inform our worldviews.

- The mind-blowing amount of information available to the average consumer today was in the first paragraph argued to be an asset in our attempts at piecing together a full, impartial, and representative picture by comparing and combining snapshots from multiple sources.
- This, however, turns out to be a naïve assumption. We are still dealt the same 24 hours a day, and we still dedicate the same proportion of our life to keeping up with the news. Having more information to choose from does not mean more information making it into our awareness.
- Moreover, if there is more information floating around out there than before, but we can only absorb the same amount of information as before, we must do more work deciding what we filter out and what we feed on. This selection process turns out to be no simple task in today's technologically-sophisticated era, where media corporations have developed tools to extend even more comprehensive control over consumers via cutting-edge algorithms that shepherd them to stories they enjoy and seal them from those that will make them log off in a huff.
- Thus, instead of encountering different accounts of a singular incident or issue, like those from conservative and progressive outfits or those representing one's own cultural group and those representing the cultural "other," which would constitute the diverse news feeds conducive for forming a balanced worldview, algorithms confine consumers to coverage that coincides with their pre-existing views on the matter. Our own, partial perspectives are not reliable, which is why we consult the news to begin with, but if the news merely reaffirms those perspectives… it is not reliable either. As such, recent innovations have made the news—or, more accurately, what we see of the news—less reliable than ever.
- A 2017 analysis by the Harvard Business Review[9] found that partisanship in the news had been increasing from the 1970s all the way into today's internet age. In a 2020 interview, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg himself admitted that partisan content "often has kind of a higher percent of people… engaging with it, commenting on it, liking it."
- Pew Research Centre's State of the Media 2016 study[10] found that a third of social media users in the US did not perceive much diversity of opinion in their news feeds. When the participants were confronted with content they considered "controversial," 83% chose to ignore it, failing which 31% would customise their feeds to see less of such content in the future, while 27% would block or unfriend the source, allowing their worldviews to persist unchallenged.
- This is corroborated by research by the University of Virginia McIntire School of Commerce[11] in 2020, which found that the more time a person spent on Facebook, the more polarised their online news they consumed. One main reason for this was how Facebook users must explicitly

[9] https://hbr.org/2017/10/research-the-rise-of-partisan-media-changed-how-companies-make-decisions

[10] https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2016/12/09/inside-the-social-media-echo-chamber/

[11] https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/10/26/facebook-algorithm-conservative-liberal-extremes/

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choose to be friends with one another, a mechanism that discourages one from seeing content from strangers outside their social circle whose viewpoints could contradict theirs.[12] Another was how the algorithm boosts stories that garner the most engagement, which includes both effusive agreement and enraged disagreement. Prioritising emotional responses means "the most intensely passionate, most partisan Facebook users" will drown out moderate ones.

- There is another, even more sinister way where modern technology warps what we see in the news, which is the digital doctoring of media to not just flummox regular netizens but also fool regulators—and if the gatekeepers can be tricked, we have little hope of guarding ourselves.

US Presidents Play Wordle 1-20
24K views • 11 days ago

Barack Obama Singing Call Me Maybe by Carly Rae Jepsen
50M views • 11 years ago

- In 2016, alternative news site All Singapore Stuff posted a photo seemingly of a collapsed roof at Punggol Waterway Terraces. The Civil Defence Force and police, waylaid by what turned out to be a manipulated photo, were deployed to the scene, wasting precious resources.
- In 2018, Belgian political party Socialistische Partij Anders created a deepfake video of then-US President Donald Trump calling Belgians to withdraw from the Paris Climate agreement, claiming they should "have the balls" to do so. The video drew many comments on the party's Facebook and Twitter pages before the party came clean and clarified it was a fake.
- The main worry with the onset of realistic-looking fake footage is, in the words of technologist Aviv Ovadya, "reality apathy." In other words, it is not that people will necessarily be deceived by lies, but that they will come to regard even non-lies as deception.
- This was seen in the case of Gabon in 2018. Its president, Ali Bongo, had not appeared in public for months, sparking rumours that he had died. His office tried to dispel concerns by posting a video of Bongo addressing the nation, but the low production quality of the video, as well as Bongo's stiff mannerisms, allowed his opponents to claim the video was a deepfake. Amid the confusion, the political situation in the country deteriorated, and the military launched a coup.

➢ To put it all together, technological advances have decreased, not increased, the reliability of the news. Quantity—the advantage of the Internet Age—means little if quality is not assured, and that certainly is a problem in a time where algorithms have ushered us into echo chambers and artificially intelligent programmes can mould and manipulate reality as they please.

➢ The lesson therefore is that the news is not a monolithic entity; it exists in the various headlines that find their way onto our feeds, the various pictures and videos that tell us stories about the world we live in. It is thus not so much the reliability of the news overall that counts, but that of the fraction of the news we encounter—and on that count it fails miserably.

➢ Therefore, it is difficult to rely on what we see of the news today.

[12] https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/01/24/in-recent-years-partisan-media-divides-have-grown-largely-driven-by-republican-distrust/

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Conclusion

As information and communications technology matured and became more and more ubiquitous, the responsibility and indeed right to produce news left the hands of its traditional masters: news institutions. Ordinary citizens, uncouth, unaccountable, and untrained, now have a hand on the mic as well, and whether this has been for better or for worse is clear. On the back of novel technology, misinformation has exploded and polarisation has been exacerbated, degrading the quality of the news, distorting our view of it, and destroying our trust in what used to inform our understanding of the world. In today's age, seeing is no longer believing, and the news can no longer be relied on.

Last Words 🗣️

Arraign (v): censure; condemn; criticise
Baleful (adj): hostile; menacing; threatening
Charlatan (n): a person faking knowledge, qualifications, or skills they do not have
Credulous (adj): gullible; naïve; overly trusting
Monolith (n): a single stone; an indivisible whole
Percolate (v): seep through; trickle down; spread
Rescind (v): cancel; overturn revoke

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Pets

Opinion: Fur babies

1 In October 2018, a woman was forcibly removed from a plane before takeoff. The reason? Airline personnel noticed that the "emotional support animal" she had brought on board in a pet carrier was in fact a squirrel—a pet that was not allowed aboard under the airline's policies but one she refused to relinquish. Defiantly she exclaimed, "You're not taking my squirrel! You will not take my baby from me!"

2 As the ballad of the therapy squirrel suggests, something significant has changed in our relationship with our pets. Pets are now endowed with new rights and privileges and emotional lives pet owners claim for them. The impulse to treat our pets as beloved children and companions is not new. Romans buried their dogs in human cemeteries and talked about them like children. But the scale and scope of our pet obsessions have vastly increased since Roman times.

3 Our changing feelings about our pets are most starkly revealed by our consumer choices: how much and for what we are now willing to spend to make our pets happy and healthy. For wealthy pet owners who can afford it, there are services that will pick up dogs and take them for weekly three-hour hikes in the countryside, even as those lucky dogs' owners toil away in cubicles to pay for it.
When pet owners leave their pets behind for a few days, they can now lodge them at resorts complete with an a la carte menu, a bed with a memory-foam mattress and Ralph Lauren sheets. Pets can be taken to the hotel in a Ferrari or Rolls-Royce.
Others offer their guests pampering spa treatments with amenities that even include boiled water, gourmet meals cooked by a chef on site, tuck-in and story-time services. For cash-poor pet owners who cannot afford spa days and guided hikes for their animals, the reigning assumption is that humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets rather than the other way around, with
the language of parenthood invoked to shame pet owners who might skimp on their responsibility to do so.

4 Animals once constituted the first circle of what surrounded man. We lived with and among animals, relying on them to survive. Today, people have elevated animals to a more privileged place in the household with pet keeping taking on outsized significance. As greater prosperity encourages more spending on pets, we would do well to reconsider the place of domesticated animals in our lives.

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1. Why has the author placed inverted commas around the phrase 'emotional support animal' (line 2)? [2]
[Question Type: Inference – Authorial Technique]

From the Passage	Inferred
Airline personnel noticed that the "**emotional support animal**" she had brought on board in a pet carrier was in fact a squirrel—a pet that was not allowed aboard under the airline's policies but one she refused to relinquish. Defiantly she exclaimed, "You're not taking my squirrel! You will not take my baby from me!"	<u>Generic Function</u> He **disagrees** with / **disapproves** of / is **disbelieving / sceptical** of / is **sarcastically deriding / mocking** the woman's claim that (1m) <u>Context</u> the squirrel has a **legitimate / official status** / serves a **medical / therapeutic role** of "emotional support animal." (1m)

2. In paragraph 2, how does the author express her belief that something significant has changed in our relationship with pets? [3]
[Question Type: Hybrid – Proof]

From the Passage	Paraphrased
The impulse to treat our pets as beloved children and companions is not new. Romans buried their dogs in human cemeteries and talked about them like children.	The author **compares** the relationships humans and their pets had in the past with those we have in the present, where... (1m)
Pets are now **endowed** with new **rights** and **privileges**	• pets **have been granted / possess entitlements / legal protections** and **benefits / perks**
and **emotional lives** pet owners claim for them	• pets are **acknowledged / recognised** as **capable of experiencing feelings / sentient**
The **scale** and **scope** of our pet **obsessions** have vastly **increased** since Roman times	• humans' **passion / preoccupation** with pets has **expanded / grown** in both **breadth / variety** and **depth / magnitude** Any 2pts for 2m.

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3. In paragraph 3, what are the two dimensions of their responsibilities towards pets that pet owners use money to fulfil? [1]
   [Question Type: Paraphrase]

From the Passage	Paraphrased
Our changing feelings about our pets are most starkly revealed by our consumer choices: how much and for what we are now willing to spend to make our pets **happy** and **healthy**.	Pet owners are expected to keep their pets **content** and **hale** / keep their pets in good **spirits** and **shape** / provide for their pets' **psychological** and **physical** well-being.

4. What is the author suggesting when he says that 'animals once constituted the first circle of what surrounded man' (line)? [2]
   [Question Type: Inference – Language Use]

From the Passage	Inferred
Animals once constituted the **first circle** of **what surrounded man**.	<u>Generic Meaning</u> It suggests that out of all the **members / parts of the ecosphere / natural world**, the animal kingdom was the one that was **most closely / directly / intimately allied / intertwined with** / **tied to** humanity, (1m)
We **lived with** and **among** animals, **relying** on them to **survive**.	<u>Context</u> in that humans **existed** in the **proximity** of animals, and **depended** on them to **get by**. (1m)

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Passage 2

Ideally, keeping a companion animal is a good thing that enriches both of your lives, bringing nothing but benefits to both parties. I cannot find fault with someone who adopts an animal from a shelter and provides care throughout the animal's life.

Yet, there are shadows that lie beneath the sunny narrative of pet ownership. Things like physical abuse, puppy mills and dog fighting. Beyond such extremes, there are common forms of everyday neglect and cruelty that even well-meaning pet owners may have a lot to answer for: punitive training, prolonged captivity, extreme confinement, and mutilations (declawing, ear and tail docking). Add to the bill lack of exercise and socialisation, boredom, and even abandonment. All this is possible because, unlike children, pets are not really family members—they are property without legal rights and few laws to protect them. Even the most responsible pet owners, which I would count myself among, are bound to fail to meet the needs of their animals due to other responsibilities and the inherent challenges of keeping a dog or cat in a world made for humans.

5. In Passage 1, the writer says that "humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets rather than the other way around" (lines 23-24). Identify one specific idea from Passage 2 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer. [2]
[Question Type: NITs – Undermine]

From the Passage	Inferred / Paraphrased
Passage 2 Even the most responsible pet owners, which I would count myself among, are bound to fail to meet the needs of their animals due to other responsibilities and the inherent challenges of keeping a dog or cat in a world made for humans.	Passage 2 points out that pet owners are not just pet owners, and must balance the duties that come with pet ownership with the other duties they have / that the world pets and pet owners live in is one designed for human needs. (1m)
Passage 1 Humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets rather than the other way around, with the language of parenthood invoked to shame pet owners who might skimp on their responsibility	This undermines the statement that humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets, which unrealistically assumes that it is possible for a pet owner to drop everything else in their life to care for their pet / that it is up to individual pet owners to care for their pets when in fact there are structural factors that limit their ability to do so. (1m) **OR**

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<u>Passage 2</u> Ideally, keeping a companion animal is a good thing that enriches both of your lives, bringing nothing but benefits to both parties.	Passage 2 asserts that the best case scenario is one where pet ownership is mutually beneficial. (1m)
<u>Passage 1</u> Humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets rather than the other way around, with the language of parenthood invoked to shame pet owners who might skimp on their responsibility	This undermines the statement that humans should adapt to and accommodate the needs of their pets, which assumes a zero-sum situation in which either human or pet must sacrifice their interests to satisfy the other's. (1m)

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Summary

Using material **from paragraphs 4 and 5**, summarise what the author has to say about **how our endless impulse for growth, wealth creation, and consumerism** have a **negative impact on the environment.**

Write your summary in no more than 120 words, not counting the opening words which are printed below. **Use your own words as far as possible.**

Excerpt

Those in power aggressively promote industries which boost the economy, no matter how much they contaminate the environment. Decision-makers trade lush forests for concrete jungles without any qualms. They devise ways to keep businesses functioning round the clock, ignoring the drain on resources which goes into keeping everything and everyone working 24/7.

Use DIPP

Step 1 **Dissect the question** and understand **what is demanded of us.**	**How –** identify the process. Who is doing what? what is the action? What are the outcomes of these actions? **Negative impact** – identify words / phrases that carry negative connotation. Which words hint at harm / injury / damage?
Step 2 **Identify the words/ ideas in** the passage **that fit these requirements.**	**How –** Identify the process Those in power **(who)** -> aggressively promote industries which boost the economy **(action)** Decision-makers **(who)** -> trade lush forests for concrete jungles without any qualms. **(action)** They **(who)** -> devise ways to keep businesses functioning round the clock. **(action)** **Negative impact** - harm / injury / damage no matter how much they contaminate the environment (**contamination is bad)**

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	trade lush forests for concrete jungles without any qualms. (**sacrificing greenery is bad)** ignoring the drain on resources which goes into keeping everything and everyone working 24/7. (**The drain on resources is bad)**
Step 3 **Paraphrase the keywords identified** Pay attention to words that modify (add information) to reflect the author's message more accurately – **adjectives / adverbs.**	**From the excerpt:** Those in power aggressively promote industries which boost the economy. **Paraphrased:** The environment deteriorates due to the governments' relentless push for commercial development. **From the excerpt:** They devise ways to keep businesses functioning round the clock, … **Paraphrased:** They formulate **policies** that ensure that **firms operate / produce continually / ceaselessly**, Notice how the sentence is not quite the same if we remove the words 'aggressively' and 'round the clock'. The idea of greed and negligence is not captured. Moreover, we should ensure that the paraphrase captures the severity and connotation of the original word.
Paraphrase the keywords identified within context Pay attention to the context and the original message of the author. **Do not simply replace a word just** because it is a synonym in the thesaurus.	**From the excerpt:** Decision-makers trade lush forests for concrete jungles … Paraphrased: People who make choices **peddle / switch / barter verdant greenery** for **vegetation made of man-made stone**… Notice how even though the words themselves are actual synonyms for the original words, they do not capture the author's intended message.

Lastly, unless the examples add information not included in the main argument, we usually exclude them from our answer since they only repeat the main idea of the author.

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