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Junior College

General Paper

Seven Polarities of GP Essays

Contextualising the Application Question

AQ: Optimism and Pessimism in Singapore

AQ: Urbanisation & the City in Singapore

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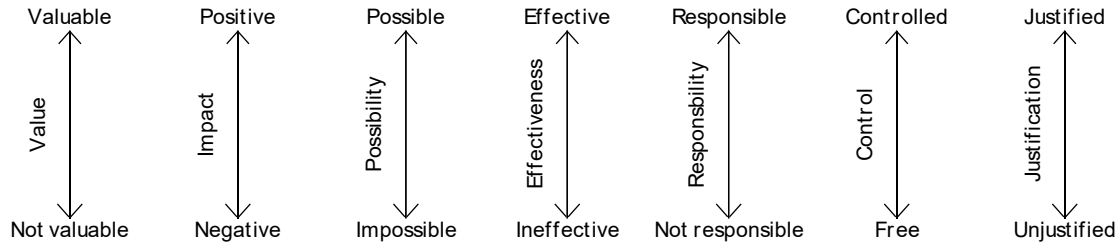
Unpacking essay questions

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:
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:

Here is an example of questions of the same topic but very different in terms of the polarity and the issue that is being discussed within the topic.

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

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TRY THIS OUT:

- 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.

No.	Question	T	I	C
1.	How **reliable** are statistics as a guide for planning the future?			
2.	'Individuals **achieve** sporting success, not nations.' Discuss.			
3.	'We shape our buildings, but then our buildings **shape** us.' To what extent is this true of your society?			
4.	To what extent **can** any society claim to be great?			
5.	Examine the view that the scientist is **concerned** only with knowledge, not morality.			
6.	Given the greater levels of international cooperation, how **necessary** is it for countries to engage in arms trade?			
7.	Is modern technology a **benefit** or a **threat** to democracy?			
8.	'In a free society, there **should** be no restrictions on freedom of speech.' Discuss.			

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No.	Question	T	I	C
1.	How **reliable** are statistics as a guide for planning the future?		E	
2.	'Individuals **achieve** sporting success, not nations.' Discuss.		V/I	
3.	'We shape our buildings, but then our buildings **shape** us.' To what extent is this true of your society?		I	
4.	To what extent **can** any society claim to be great?		P	
5.	Examine the view that the scientist is **concerned** only with knowledge, not morality.		R	
6.	Given the greater levels of international cooperation, how **necessary** is it for countries to engage in arms trade?		V	
7.	Is modern technology a **benefit** or a **threat** to democracy?		I	
8.	'In a free society, there **should** be no restrictions on freedom of speech.' Discuss.		C	

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Answers to Task 1:

No.	Question	Dissection
1.	How **reliable** are statistics as a guide for planning the future? • **Polarity:** "Reliability" is part of effectiveness. The proposed solution is "statistics". The problem is "planning the future". • **Topic:** Statistics • **Issue:** Statistics are reliable for planning the future vs. statistics are unreliable for planning the future. • Discuss the defining features of statistics – empirical, generalisable, objective, quantitative, requiring human numeracy, etc. – and how they do or do not lend themselves to reliable planning. • Do not bring in better alternatives for planning the future; focus not on what something else can do, but what statistics cannot do.	Effectiveness

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2.	'Individuals **achieve** sporting success, not nations.' Discuss. • **Polarity:** "Achieve" can be interpreted as "cause". It is asking about the Value / Impact of actions, decisions, efforts, investments etc. at individual or national levels on the eventual sporting success. • **Topic:** Sport • **Issue:** Successes in sport are caused by individuals, not nations, vs. successes in sport are caused by nations, and / not individuals. • Do not write separate paragraphs discussing individual successes or national successes in isolation. Each paragraph should argue why it is one party and not the other, or why it is both parties, that achieve sporting success through the things they respectively do. • Do not only write about Joseph Schooling.	Value / Impact Comparison
3.	'We shape our buildings, but then our buildings **shape** us.' To what extent is this true of your society? • **Polarity:** "Shape", if the subject is "buildings" and the object is "us", humans and societies, can be interpreted as "influence". It is asking about the Impact of buildings on how we live. • **Topic:** Buildings • **Issue:** Buildings influence humans and societies vs. buildings do not influence the humans and societies. • Discuss the defining features of buildings – functional, monumental, permanent, physical, shared, etc. – and how they do or do not lend themselves to influencing us. • The first part of the quote is not the crux of the question, and can be read as an explicit condition – *given that* we shape our buildings, do our buildings in turn shape us? This does not mean it can be ignored completely; rather, it reminds us that, often, people shape buildings in order that they might shape other people. • Discuss the defining features of Singapore – developed, globalised, multicultural, etc. – relevant to our relationship with our buildings.	Impact Explicit condition Given context

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4.	To what extent **can** any society claim to be great? • **Polarity:** "Can" is about whether an ideal, in this case "greatness", is reachable. It is asking whether there could ever be a great society. • **Topic:** Societies • **Issue:** It is possible for a society to reach greatness vs. it is impossible for a society to reach greatness. • Define what greatness entails at a societal level. This would be the "to-do list", in each paragraph should discuss whether or not each "task" on the to-do list can be ticked off or not given the capacities, means, and resources of human societies. • There is a sense of scepticism that *any* society could ever be great. To agree is straightforward, but to disagree, discuss why there could be no such thing, whatever the case or context, as a great society.	Possibility Absolute
5.	Examine the view that the scientist is **concerned** only with knowledge, not morality. • **Polarity:** To be "concerned" with something is to feel responsible for it. It is asking whether the responsibility of scientists includes what is right and wrong in a moral sense, on top of what is right and wrong in a factual sense. • **Topic:** Science, morality • **Issue:** Science's responsibility includes only knowledge, not morality vs. science's responsibility includes morality on top of knowledge. • This is a difficult question that links two topics, science and morality. Furthermore, unlike typical morality questions, it is asking not about what should be the case, but what is the case. • Do not write separate paragraphs discussing knowledge or morality in isolation. Each paragraph should argue either that scientists are responsible for knowledge, not morality, or that they are responsible for both knowledge and morality. (It is not advised to argue that they are responsible only for morality, not knowledge.)	Responsibility Dual topic Comparison

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6.	Given the greater levels of international cooperation, how **necessary** is it for countries to engage in arms trade? • **Polarity:** "Necessity" is the extreme end of value. It is asking whether the functions fulfilled by trading arms are too valuable to do without, and whether that is the only way to fulfil those functions. • **Topic:** Arms trade • **Issue:** Trading arms is still necessary in spite of greater international cooperation vs. trading arms is now unnecessary because of greater international cooperation. • Discuss the different functions of trading arms – economic, political, strategic; to attack, to defend, to show (deterrence); etc. – relative to the different contexts – big vs. small nations, arms buyers vs arms sellers, etc. – relevant here. • That we have greater levels of international cooperation today must be taken as a given. Discuss how this change in the global climate has in turn changed the necessity of trading arms – it may *no longer* be necessary *because* of the change, it may *still* be necessary *in spite* of the change, or it may be *all the more* necessary *precisely because of* the change.	Value Explicit condition

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7.	Is modern technology a **benefit** or a **threat** to democracy? • **Polarity:** "Benefit" and "threat" are two ways in which a factor can impact another. The disruptor is modern technology, which changes how democratic the world is before and after its disruption. • **Topic:** Technology, democracy • **Issue:** Modern technology has constructive effects on democracy vs. modern technology has destructive effects on democracy. • This is a difficult question that links two topics, (modern) technology and democracy. Discuss the defining features of modern technology – the "modern-ness" of modern technology – and how they make it a force for or force against democracy. • Modern technology is not just the internet or social media. Focus on its defining traits as a category, not just examples of it.	Impact Dual topic
8.	'In a free society, there **should** be no restrictions on freedom of speech.' Discuss. • **Polarity:** "Should" requires us to determine precisely where the line between freedom and control should be drawn. There is an inherent tension between free speech and its suppression for us to mediate. • **Topic:** Freedom of speech • **Issue:** There should be complete freedom of speech in a free society vs. there should only be partial freedom of speech in a free society. • The mention of a free society sounds tautological, but the question is asking us whether restrictions on freedom of speech are compatible with or even conducive for the idea of a free society. In other words, do not just write about the pros and cons of free speech; the pros and cons must be framed relative to the ideal of a free society.	Control Given context

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Task 2: Prescription

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

P: To what extent can any society claim to be great?	
I: Is modern technology a benefit or a threat to democracy?	

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Suggested Essay Plans

P: To what extent can any society claim to be great?

A society can claim to be great since…

1. Nations that effectively conceptualise and implement robust structures and systems, enable excellence across multiple spheres, exemplifying the essence of greatness.

2. Societies often attain elevated status by assuming leadership roles within an increasingly globalised context—not through dominance, but by fostering the advancement of all humanity and guiding collective progress, thereby distinguishing themselves among nations.

Nonetheless, some maintain that no society can truly be deemed great, asserting that…

3. Good governance requires careful equilibrium, with success in one domain frequently necessitating trade-offs in others, thus precluding any society from achieving an idealised state of greatness.

4. Moreover, even the most distinguished and accomplished societies cannot ensure that prosperity benefits every individual, particularly those whose hardship may have contributed to national advancement—casting doubt on the nation's claims to true greatness.

I: Is modern technology a benefit or a threat to democracy?

Modern technology is mostly beneficial to democracy…

1. Citizens can make political decisions that affect society through the use of new technologies, which can impact the democratic process.

2. Modern technology enables individuals to communicate their perspectives and giving them the means to organise movements that seek to influence national governance in a way that lines up with the will of the people.

However, technology itself is neutral; it can be utilised for various purposes, including those that may not benefit democracy. Therefore, it is relevant to examine situations where technology has negative effects on democratic systems.

3. The availability of information does not ensure well-informed participation in political processes, as technological tools can distribute both accurate and inaccurate information, potentially affecting democratic engagement adversely.

4. Technology can be used either to empower or disempower the population, depending on context and application. In some instances, state authorities have used technological means to restrict civil liberties or reinforce government control, contributing to increased authoritarianism in certain nation.

Contextualising the Application Question

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Last Words about the Application Question

The application question is a critical response to the arguments in the passage. The markers know that unlike Paper 1 where you are given 90 minutes to contemplate and construct coherent arguments, you have at most 30 minutes to do this. This means the expectations of structure are much less stringent than in Paper 1. The key components of the AQ that are expected will be for you to

a. Answer the question
b. Fulfil the requirements of the question
i. Make a relevant reference to the text
ii. Explain with clarity your view on the issue
iii. Substantiate your view with a relevant or specific context to Singapore.
iv. Consider a different perspective that either provides additional support to your context or presents a conflicting view.
v. Ensure that you are able to resolve the two competing contexts.

Your examples and explanations do not need to be long drawn and unique occurrences. Using a trend to illustrate relevance to your society is sufficient as long as time and words spent on observations and analysis of trend/ example > time and words spent on describing the trend/ example.

If you find yourself short of time, please spent minimal time on the introduction; use the introduction to establish your general stance on the issue raised by the author.

We have included a selection of passages and corresponding AQ questions for you to practice and workshop. The focus of these exercises is to ensure that you are able to identify arguments and set them up. The examples are meant to help you substantiate arguments and are events and trends based on the Singapore context. Word of advice, be flexible in how and where you use the examples. They may not be only specifically relevant to the passage it is attached to.

ISSUE: Optimism and Pessimism in Singapore

TMJC 2022 Preliminary Examination

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Passage 1. *Kevin Kelly considers the value of optimism in our lives.*

1 Poet Khalil Gibran once wrote that "your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens." The attitude to which he refers to here is what we know as optimism. Philosophically, optimism is linked to the notion that the world is fundamentally good, that it has purpose and meaning and that, therefore, one can reasonably expect fulfillment. There is a sense that one can control one's environment and destiny. So, there are important reasons why we should be optimistic.

2 Optimism yields happier and emotionally stronger people. Optimism equips people with a greater ability to deal with hardship and stress in their lives. The psychological temperament of an optimist is not a sunny disposition or a delusion that everything is ideal. Rather, optimists believe that bad things are produced by temporary causes that can be overcome, while pessimists believe bad things always happen, and if anything good happens, it is temporary. It is a swap of the default - from the universe is conspiring against you, to the universe is conspiring for you. Optimism can be learnt, especially by children. Everyone is born with a different bias, but a child's assumption can be shifted towards a more optimistic view by parenting, training, and education. In this regard, optimism is a skill that anyone can get better at. Likewise, at the societal level, optimism is a skill that bestows resilience and adaptability.

3 Certainly, overly positive assumptions can lead to disastrous miscalculations. They make us less likely to get health checkups, apply sunscreen, and more likely to bet the farm on a bad investment. But the bias towards optimism keeps us moving forward. Without optimism, our ancestors might never have ventured far from their tribes, and we might all still be cave dwellers, huddled together and dreaming of light and heat. The primary ingredient for progress is optimism. The unwavering belief that something can be better is what drives mankind forward. To make progress, we need to be able to imagine possibilities – better ones – and we need to believe that we can achieve them. Optimism thus underpins innovation. It challenges us to doubt the status quo and ask probing questions for the world to change. Widely considered to be a visionary, Steve Jobs wanted to revolutionise the workplace by making computers more affordable and easier to use. He envisioned a future where technology creates opportunities to amplify a human's ability and improve our lives, and consistently pushed back against what was conventional at that time. Such faith in the possibility of a better future is what motivates mankind to pursue his goals.

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4 Often, the media's excessive focus on bad news creates stories about our world that distorts reality, divides us and counterproductively limits our ability to respond effectively to the challenges we face. For too long, the press has been telling negative stories about human nature and what is happening in our world. The broad narrative that arises is that things are bad and getting worse; that we live in an acutely dangerous world characterised by self-interest, competition and scarcity. However, recent decades have in fact brought much progress globally and by many measures. There is much to be optimistic about as we are wealthier, healthier, and safer. Global life expectancy has more than doubled in the past century. Two centuries ago, 8 in 10 people still lived in extreme poverty, today it is fewer than 1 in 10. War, disease and natural disasters now claim fewer lives than at any point in our history. These recent developments have shown that the 'doom and gloom' news narrative no longer serves society. Rather, a more inspiring lens on the world is needed to better reflect the positive trends. Where the media puts its attention and how it frames the information it presents is a precious choice. It wields a powerful influence over our individual and collective mind states, and it guides our shared story. There is thus an urgent need, and opportunity, for a better story about ourselves, our world, and what is possible.

5 Optimism is a slow march towards incremental betterment. The reason we can and should still be optimistic is that our estimates of future woes do not take into account our ability to solve them. The ultimate reason we should (and can) be optimistic is not because our problems are smaller than we thought, but because our capacity to solve them is larger than we thought.

Passage 2. *Alain de Bruyne discusses why pessimism is the key to a good society.*

1 It might be normal to imagine that good societies are those where the majority hold optimistic views about themselves and their collective futures. After all, what is the use of brooding over the innumerable ways things could go wrong? Nonetheless, in an increasingly VUCA[1] world where the realities of economic downturns, disease outbreaks, environmental issues, conflict and humanitarian crises dominate our newsfeeds, it seems more sensible that in preparation, one should assume the worst in order to hope for the best. Thus, pessimism is instead the key for the maintenance of good societies.

2 At the core of pessimism is the idea that everyone, however outwardly normal, is flawed: short-term, vengeful and prone to recklessness. Even tennis icon Serena Williams, known as a role model not only for her sporting success but also her push for gender and racial equality, caused controversy during the 2018 US Open Women's Final when she had an emotional outburst and a heated exchange against an umpire over accusations of cheating. A brutal acceptance of this facilitates a range of measures that make for exceptionally wise, calm and reasonable societies.

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3 Because pessimists know how flawed individuals can be, in an ideally pessimistic society, boring and extremely steady politicians are valued over eloquent but reactive ones. With Donald Trump now the archetype of populist politics that could seriously derail progress, people are sobering up to the reality that the world needs well-advised leaders with acumen and composure instead of those who give in to the whims and fancies of the people. Pessimistic societies prefer measured, slow-moving governments which are rational and deliberative, rather than those that react haphazardly to the fluctuations of public opinion which are prone to hysteria and overreaction.

4 In addition, understanding that mankind is flawed by nature and therefore prone to self-destructive tendencies, pessimists (who value order and self-control) willingly accept a paternalistic government as the price for limiting those tendencies. Governments are expected to render an average life as attractive as possible. Public housing, state schools, public hospitals and transportation will be superb, because governments know we tend to make impaired decisions. We are hence dependent on them to make sound decisions to provide for a reasonable standard of living and quality of life.

5 In pessimistic societies, citizens assume that the raw human mind needs a huge amount of structured, targeted help to cope with life's challenges and prepare for an increasingly volatile and disrupted global economy. Therefore, education systems are elaborate, broad, ambitious, and well-resourced. The curriculum is not merely focussed on technical skills though; there is a lot of help around emotional issues too, as it is acknowledged that students are highly stressed and tightly wound in the pursuit of academic excellence to secure a well-paying job for a 'bright future'.

6 Pessimism will be the norm in the days ahead. In an era where the relative peace and prosperity the world has enjoyed for decades is constantly shattered by doomsday predictions, we are forced to realise that while humankind has made great strides, we must still live with an ethic of stewardship and caution for our continued survival. The profound consequence will be a society where there will be a lot to be cheerful about – though, of course, the pessimistic citizenry would never dare to put it like that.

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AQ: The reading passages cover a range of views about the value of optimism and pessimism. How important is it to be optimistic or pessimistic for you and your society?
Support your answer with reference to:

- The ideas and opinions from **at least** one of the reading passages
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

TASK 1A: Identify the **Topic, Issus** and **Opinion** in the passages

	PASSAGE 1	**PASSAGE 2**
TOPIC		
ISSUE		
OPINION		

TASK 1B: Extract 2 relevant arguments from the passages

From Passage 1
From Passage 2

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TASK 1C: What contexts might you be able to apply to support the arguments in **TASK 1B?**

From Passage 1
From Passage 2

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1. Covid-19 and Anxiety

- During the pandemic, a study by the Institute of Mental Health found that 9.4% of people here met the criteria for clinical anxiety, while 9.3% met the criteria for mild to severe stress
- The top three causes of anxiety and stress were: Worry that family or friends might get infected, financial loss due to the pandemic, and unemployment
- The IMH Mental Health Helpline saw 50% more callers in 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, with a peak seen in April 2020 which coincided with the start of the Circuit Breaker
- This Example Shows That (TEST): Covid-19 impacted not just the physical health but also the mental wellness of people in SG

2. Panic Buying

- When Covid-19 hit, SG went through several waves of panic buying as people rushed to supermarkets to buy all sorts of products, including instant noodles and toilet paper
- When Malaysia announced in 2022 that it would halt the export of live chickens to SG, people flocked to wet markets and supermarkets, clearing out the shelves to stock up on meat before the ban
- TEST: The “kiasu” (scared to lose) and “kiasi” (scared to die) attitudes of Singaporeans, as well as their anxiety and pessimism about the future during crises, can be seen from these instances of panic buying

3. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Mental Health and Wellbeing

- The government formed the Covid-19 Mental Wellness Task Force in 2020 to tackle mental health needs, including the aforementioned anxiety and stress, brought about by the pandemic
- This was expanded into the Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being in 2021, to develop an overarching strategy to tackle mental health issues in SG beyond the pandemic
- The Taskforce has launched a public consultation and developed a series of key focus areas to improve the overall mental health situation in SG moving forward
- TEST: Partly spurred on by increased awareness and demand during the pandemic, the government has taken steps to address the issue of mental health in SG at a national level

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4. <u>Stress in Schools</u>

- A 2017 study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that 86% of students in SG were worried about poor grades at school, compared to 66% in other OECD countries
- 76% felt very anxious for tests even if they were well prepared, compared with the OECD average of 55%
- MOE has taken recent steps to address this, scrapping mid-year exams for all Primary and Secondary schools by 2023
- TEST: SG students are anxious and stressed about grades, but steps are being taken to tackle this

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ISSUE: Urbanisation & the City in Singapore

Taken from JPJC 2022 Prelimiary Examination

Passage 1. *Frederick Peters argues for the evergreen appeal of the city.*

1 The world over, cities will struggle, but they will rise. It helps to remember why so many Americans (and people worldwide) live in cities. For centuries, people have flocked to New York, to Paris, to Rome, to Berlin, to Shanghai, to Los Angeles. They have come seeking jobs, seeking companionship, seeking freedom, seeking love. In these pandemic days, it does well to remember what it is that makes urban dwellers committed, even as so much press today is being devoted to urban flight. It is not just the theatre, or the restaurants, or the visits to Yankee Stadium. Our attraction to cities depends on some more fundamental characteristics.

2 Cities foment change. New ideas are born within the crucible of the melting pot. With so many people living cheek by jowl with one another in a liberal environment, different ideas inevitably bubble up, come into contact with one another, and synthesise, creating new societal directions. Liberalism embraces the notion of people thinking differently and co-existing comfortably. It is this trait that has, over the years, drawn so many different types of people from so many different backgrounds to a place like New York. There is a like-minded group for you in the city if you are black or white, gay or straight, a professional athlete or a professional musician or a professional model, from Wuhan or Wyoming. This diversity also fuels the discussion, the argument, which leads to the change described above.

3 Next, cities are both anonymous and embracing. Just as people have flocked to cities throughout history to find like-minded people, others choose them because they offer a kind of invisibility. Amidst so many, it is not hard to choose to be invisible. The lonely city painted by Edward Hopper and the crowded city painted by George Bellows are both the same city. Job opportunities in cities exceed those elsewhere. Why do people from all over the world move from their original birthplaces to cities? Of course, much of it has to do with employment: jobs tend to cluster in cities. Even with the advent of Zoom, most people still want to return to the office (according to a recent Gensler survey, only 12% of those asked indicated that they wanted to continue working full time from home). And the majority of those offices are still clustered in urban areas. When the dust settles, people will still be moving to urban centres for work.

4 Cities attract communities of affinity since time immemorial. For decades, if not centuries, those who felt outcast in their home environments have gravitated to cities. Here, there are others like you, regardless of what you love. Whatever your social, artistic, sexual, or spare-time proclivities are, others in your city share them in a way that cannot be guaranteed in your hometown. Plus, by and large, no one is watching.

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5 Urban populations ebb and flow. Today, many have decided to postpone returning to their urban lives as long as they have reasonable alternatives. Others are deciding to quit urban life altogether. As that happens, people are always moving in. They come for jobs, they come for community, and they come because New York will always remain a melting pot of opportunity. Especially as more reasonable immigration laws re-open our borders to seekers from the world over, and our cities continue to embrace seekers from all over the country, American urban areas will continue to showcase the values which made us the country we are. The world over, cities will struggle, but they will rise.

Passage 2: *Mamka Anyona and Stefan Peterson are of the view that city living impacts our health adversely.*

1 Urbanisation is quickly increasing across the globe. Today, some 55% of the world's population live in cities and the number is projected to reach 70% by 2050. This shift has come with major advantages. It has become easier to consolidate the workforce, driving economic development and making it cheaper to provide services such as education, health, and sanitation to larger populations at lower fixed costs. However, urbanisation has also led to a rapid change in the way human beings live and interact with one another, with a cascade of adverse consequences to our health and environment.

2 City living has led to more sedentary lifestyles. For most of human existence, physical activity has been incidental to daily living, and exposure to the outdoors and green spaces was higher than they are today. In the age of urbanisation, people live in high-rise buildings with less exposure to green spaces for outdoor activities. In addition, green spaces are unequally distributed in cities, with low-income neighbourhoods having a lower density of green spaces and facing more barriers to accessing them. In the United States, inequality along wealth and racial lines correlates with distance to green spaces, with Black and Hispanic communities having the lowest levels of access. Disparity along wealth lines is replicated strongly in cities in the Global South.

3 Urbanisation's impact on health has been unprecedented, leading to a 'double burden' of diseases in low and middle-income countries. Historically, countries have 'transitioned' from infectious to non-communicable disease (NCD) burdens as they advanced economically. However, urbanisation has contributed to a rapidly growing burden of NCDs such as heart diseases, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases. As many countries are also still contending with unresolved significant burdens of infectious diseases, undernutrition, and poor maternal and child health outcomes, this double burden of disease slows economic and social development due to productivity losses and poverty, often from catastrophic out-of-pocket medical spending.

4 Due to urbanisation, people use motorised transportation at the highest rates in human history, significantly reducing one incidental source of physical activity and increasing pollution. While 9 out of 10 people worldwide are breathing polluted air, people in many

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cities are suffering stratospheric levels of air pollution, leading to sickness and an estimated seven million deaths worldwide every year.

5 In addition, the urban food environment perpetuates injustice between those who can access nutritious food and those who cannot, with 'food deserts' and 'food oases[1]' following inequality lines that pervade all other realms of capitalist living. In many low-income 'food desert' neighbourhoods, individuals have limited access to affordable and nutritious food, and residents are often forced to subsist on unhealthy, cheap fast food, in contrast to 'food oases' neighbourhoods, which have higher access to fresh foods. In general, urbanisation reduces access to fresh food for all, as food is sold far from where it was cultivated. Industrial farming practices further damage the environment, reducing the quality of the air we breathe and exposing us to climate catastrophes.

6 On top of the negative impact on physical activity and diets, urbanisation has atomised living, tearing the social fabric and reducing the communal living that characterised most of human existence. This has led to isolation, with every succeeding generation recording increasing levels of social isolation and loneliness, and related mental and emotional health conditions such as anxiety and depression. In some cities, young people have resorted to completely cutting themselves off from society due to the pressures of modern city living, such as the case of hikikomori in Japan, characterised by a form of severe social withdrawal among young adults who become recluses in their parents' homes, unable to work or go to school for months or years.

7 But cities are also engines of change, leading progress on the multi-sectoral collaboration required for the sustainable health of both people and the planet. Cities across the world are creating green spaces in increasingly innovative ways, and may be our best bet in combating the impact of the fast-approaching climate change catastrophe, with cities being the centre of mission-driven approaches to climate and carbon neutrality. In a similar vein, cities are growing hubs of the renewed youth activism that is driving change — including initiatives such as Fridays for Future, now active in 7,500 cities across all continents. We must embrace our urbanised existence and support the transitions needed to improve the quality of life in cities. For better or worse, the world's future will see most people living in cities, and it is incumbent upon us to take the good while working together to mitigate the bad.

AQ: The reading passages cover a range of views about city living and its impact on health.

How far do you agree or disagree with the views on city living and its resulting impact on health?

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Support your answer with reference to

- the ideas and opinions from **at least one** of the reading passages.
- examples drawn from your experience and that of your society.

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TASK 1A: Identify the **Topic, Issus** and **Opinion** in the passages

	PASSAGE 1	PASSAGE 2
TOPIC		
ISSUE		
OPINION		

TASK 1B: Extract 2 relevant arguments from the passages

From Passage 1
From Passage 2

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TASK 1C: What contexts might you be able to apply to support the arguments in **TASK 1B?**

From Passage 1
From Passage 2

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City living and its impact on health- Singapore

1. Urban Planning in Singapore

- The overarching plan guiding urban development in SG is the Concept Plan, which guides development over the next 50 years and is reviewed every 10 years
- Engagement for the review of the Concept Plan started in July 2021. This takes into account changes brought on by Covid-19, including the importance of being adaptable in city planning, and for land-scarce SG to have land that can be easily converted to other uses
- Meanwhile, the Master Plan 2019 guides the medium-term development over the next 10-15 years, taking into account the broader goals set out in the Concept Plan. Short-term planning is also done
- **This Example Shows That (TEST):** Long, medium and short-term planning are all required for good urban development of a city like SG

2. Singapore the Green City

- In 1967, Lee Kuan Yew introduced the "garden city" concept for SG, not just to make life more pleasant but also to signify that SG was well-organised and a good destination for tourists and foreign investments
- This has evolved into the latest "City in Nature" vision under the National Parks Board. It involved planting flowering trees, developing a park connector network, incorporating skyrise greenery and adopting biophilic designs
- Today, SG is one of the greenest cities in the world, with more than 7,800 hectares of green spaces linked by 370km of park connectors
- TEST: SG is living proof that cities can coexist with nature through dedicated efforts

3. Singapore the Clean City

- Cities are often associated with pollution and litter, but SG has bucked the trend, being voted the cleanest city in the world by Time Out in its 2021 survey
- Several campaigns are held in SG to encourage people to maintain cleanliness, including the annual month-long "Keep Clean, Singapore!" campaign by the Public Hygiene Council and the SGClean campaign launched in 2020. Schools also regularly conduct litter-picking and beach-cleaning activities
- There are also heavy penalties for littering in SG - those caught may be fined up to $10,000, and may have to undergo a corrective work order, cleaning public areas for up to 12 hours
- TEST: A combination of campaigns and penalties have helped SG be a clean city despite its dense population

4. Tackling Urbanisation's Health Issues

- The National Environment Agency holds regular campaigns to tackle the spread of vector-borne diseases, most notably dengue. SG residents are encouraged to do the mozzie wipe-out, and take steps to protect themselves from the dengue virus

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- During the Covid-19 pandemic, strictly-enforced safe management measures, especially in crowded settings, helped keep the coronavirus from spreading uncontrollably. These included tough penalties and the deployment of safe distancing ambassadors to remind people to abide by the rules
- TEST: Urbanisation and cities have been linked to increased disease spread, but SG has put measures in place to counter this trend

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