

Language Paper 2: Question 5

1. "It has never been easy being a teenager, but young people today face more challenges than they have ever done before."

Write a speech for your school assembly, stating whether or not you agree with this view.

2. "Nurses and teachers are public servants and therefore should not go on strike."

Write a letter to your local newspaper, stating whether or not you think this is right.

3. "School uniforms stifle creativity and individuality."

Write a speech for your school assembly, stating whether or not you think school uniforms should be worn.

4. "We live in a 'throwaway society' where people have forgotten the value of the things they have."

Write an article for your school newspaper, stating whether or not you think this is true.

5. "Young people today see little value in exercise."

Write a speech for your school assembly, stating whether or not you agree with this view.

6. "People assume it's the younger generation that are rude, selfish and ignorant but this isn't always the case."

Write an article for a newspaper in which you voice your opinion on this matter.

7. "People who eat meat argue that it's 'natural' for humans to consume animals. But is this true or just an excuse to ignore the horrific ways in which animals are killed for food?"

Write an article for your school magazine in which you argue whether or not we should all be vegetarian.

8. "Heavy users of social media are less happy and have more problems at school and home."

Write a letter to your local newspaper, arguing whether or not you think this is true.

9. "Children learn more from their experiences outside school than they do from their lessons inside."

Write a speech for your school Leavers' Assembly to explain what you think makes a good education.

10. "Many university degrees these days are barely worth the paper they're written on."

Write a speech for your school assembly in which you argue whether or not a college or university education is essential for getting a good job.

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Q3. "School Uniforms stifle creativity and individuality."

Write a speech for your school assembly, stating whether or not you agree with this view.

Should we cut our ties to school uniforms?

School uniform – we all have to wear it and few of us like it; but is it really necessary in today's day and age?

We all probably think that, in a perfect world, school uniforms wouldn't exist. All of us students would project our personalities through our clothes at school, just as we do at home. Schools wouldn't impress on us the need to wear skirts to a certain length, or to do a minimum number of buttons up on shirts – and if the rules weren't there, we wouldn't try to break them. However, we don't live in a perfect world, and learning to fit in is one of the things being at school teaches us; but is this necessarily a good thing? There are plenty of arguments to suggest that far from creating a sense of school identity and community, uniforms can actually have a detrimental effect. Shouldn't we be distinguished not by what we're wearing, but by how we interact and engage with each other? Shouldn't expressing ourselves with confidence be the priority, rather than the length of our ties or the shine on our shoes? It's time we examine the true benefits of school uniform and whether or not it still holds value in today's society.

Firstly, there's a reason it's called a 'uniform': it's because we're all meant to look the same. I know some people have this idea that school uniforms are democratic – they think that if we all wear the same clothes, no one can be teased for not having the latest designer gear – but, from what I see, that's not really true. This school is crammed with uniform-wearing pupils, and no two of them ever look the same. We all know that teenagers customise whatever they wear. If uniform rules are strictly enforced, it all becomes about the bag or the coat or the shoes: people will still be picked on, but the specific item they're targeted for might become more personal. For example, would you rather people laughed at you because of your clothes (which aren't actually a part of you) or because of your hairstyle? Is it more hurtful to be told you have an ugly shirt or an ugly face? Surely part of growing up is discovering who we are and what makes us all unique; but once we're forced to dress like each other, what happens to our individuality then?

Secondly, school uniforms are supposed to promote unity, but are they in fact just causing division, particularly when 'gang wars' erupt between rival schools who will target anyone with the 'wrong' uniform? Teachers might think that our uniform is a source of collective pride for us as pupils, but it can also be the reason why we suddenly find ourselves in the middle of a fight on the way home. I know we're all told that uniform is important so we can be recognised easily when out on school trips and so forth; but you would hope that, after teaching us for several terms, our teachers could recognise us in a crowd without us needing to be colour coded! I've yet to encounter a teacher who was forced to play "Where's Wally" with her students because they turned up for a school trip in their own clothes! Moreover, since the majority of time we spend in our uniform is actually within school, what is the point of claiming it's a way of identifying us? With all the safeguarding procedures in place that make schools harder to access than Fort Knox, is it really likely that students from other schools are going to infiltrate our classrooms?

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Q7. "People who eat meat argue that it's 'natural' for humans to consume animals. But is this true or just an excuse to ignore the horrific ways in which animals are killed for food?"

Write an article for your school magazine in which you argue whether or not we should all be vegetarian.

‘Nice To Meat You’: Britain’s Love Affair With Meat Continues.

Despite the claims that vegetarianism is on the increase, there is wide evidence to confirm that the majority of the British public still eats meat at least twice a week.

We all know that numerous arguments abound for and against eating meat – from the vegetarians and vegans who think that ‘Meat is murder!’ to those who believe that salad is strictly for rabbits. For many people, the issue is complex, particularly for those who are (and intend to remain) non-meat eaters. Whilst recent government statistics suggest that roughly a quarter of us have cut back on our meat-intake in recent years; nevertheless, sales of meat continue to flourish. So, is eating meat today still socially acceptable? Is going meat-free really better for our health? More than ninety percent of the British population continue to eat meat more than once a week, so why does the debate continue? We need to examine the arguments and see what really makes sense.

Some people think that a clear case for not eating meat is that most humans are revolted by the sight of blood, intestines, and raw flesh and can’t tolerate hearing the screams of animals being ripped apart. They would argue that the bloody reality of killing and eating animals is innately repulsive to us; yet human beings have been eating meat for thousands of years, despite all this. Doesn’t this suggest that our eating habits are determined by what something tastes like, rather than what it looks or sounds like? And, to be honest, how many of us actually kill our own food, or even have to prepare it? These days, most of us buy conveniently pre-packaged meat: ‘oven-ready’ chickens, neatly sliced steaks, and minced beef or lamb. Supermarkets have sanitised the buying of meat to the extent that most of it is no more offensive to the eye than a packet of cheese slices or a box of French Fancies. Blood and guts have been removed so that a large proportion of our meat doesn’t actually look like dead flesh at all.

Many staunch non-meat eaters would argue that humans have short, soft fingernails and small, dull canine teeth whereas all true carnivores have sharp claws and large canine teeth that are capable of tearing flesh without the help of knives and forks. This, they claim, is a clear indication that we are not genetically programmed to eat meat; but this is a senseless argument that most people no longer believe. Not only is there no requirement for us to have the sort of sharp teeth and claws we would tend to associate with werewolves and other mythical half-human, half-animal hybrids; but, even if there was, then this thesis totally ignores the reasons why we utilise tableware. Cutlery is used in developed countries because we are ‘civilised’ people and this is part of our social conditioning; but what about the countries where people still eat with their fingers, tearing meat apart with their teeth rather than with knives and forks? And even in the UK, we still tend to revert to ‘caveman ways’ every summer, when barbecue season comes around and we char bits of flesh over a firepit before chewing the meat off the bones in what our vegetarian friends would suggest is animalistic behaviour. Our early ancestors were certainly meat-eaters – otherwise why would we possess two types of teeth (canines and incisors) whose sole function is to grip, tear and shear meat?

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*Q8 “Heavy users of social media are less happy and have more problems at school and home.”
Write a letter to your local newspaper, arguing your point of view.*

Is social media really as black as it’s painted?

Dear Sir,

It was with some concern that I read your recent article which claimed that today's teenagers no longer read – apart from perusing their text messages. Whilst it is true that the current 'internet generation' has grown up with social media, I feel your article was unfair in its allegations that its use has caused us to be 'less happy' and to have 'more problems at school and home'.

We all know that life has changed dramatically within the past twenty or thirty years. Our parents probably spent more time outdoors than we do now and easily accessible home-internet was scarce if not non-existent – but does this mean our parents actually spent more time reading than teenagers do today? Did the lack of social media actually make our ancestors happier people – or is it just that today we express our emotions more openly, instead of hiding out true feelings? And, in the same vein, do we really experience 'more problems at school and home'; or is it just that previous generations weren't able to share these problems on Facebook or Instagram? There is certainly a case for arguing that the quality of our lives has not degenerated due to social media and that, conversely, many of us have been able to receive help with the problems we face due to the many support systems available to us at the swipe of a fingertip.

One of the primary arguments against social media is that it is 'killing literacy': why should today's youngsters pick up a book when it's so much easier to trawl through texts or check Twitter feeds? Yet many authors rely on social media to promote their latest releases, and sites such as 'Goodreads' actively encourage their readers to sign up for 'challenges' in which they pledge to read a certain number of books a year. Far from being the death of literacy, apps such as 'Kindle' or 'Google books' have revived the nation's love of reading – after all, isn't it so much easier to download multiple books onto the phones we carry in our pockets than to cart around heavy volumes in our schoolbags? And going abroad is so much easier when our holiday reading is all contained within a tiny tablet or smartphone instead of us using half our luggage allowance on a suitcase full of paperbacks. With the added bonus of many free downloadable books, often via links on social media, surely literacy levels should soon be rising instead of falling.

Useful phrases: Introduction

- We have all heard that _____
- Popular culture is saturated with examples of _____
e.g. Popular culture is saturated with examples of people who did not go on to further education yet, nevertheless, have still made successes of their lives.
- Legitimate arguments abound for and against _____

- Despite the fact that _____, there is wide evidence to confirm that _____
e.g. Despite the fact that school uniform has obvious advantages, there is wide evidence to confirm that most youngsters would prefer not to wear it.
- For many people, the issue of _____ is complex, particularly for those who _____
e.g. For many people, the issue of eating meat is complex, particularly for those among us who are staunch vegetarians.

Useful phrases: Opposite arguments

- One of the chief arguments today in favour of _____ is _____
- Many people today think that _____
e.g. Many people today think that social media has adverse affects on teenagers ...
- Recent government statistics suggest that _____

Useful phrases: Arguments

- However, this argument is _____, _____ and even _____ since ...
e.g. However, this argument is childish, simplistic and even facile since ...
e.g. However, this argument is ridiculous, ludicrous and even downright nonsensical since ...
- Far from being the death of _____, _____ has revived _____
e.g. Far from being the death of literacy, social media has revived the nation's love of reading.
- It is a popular misconception that _____
- ... yet the opposite is a more valid argument.
- Although many people genuinely believe that _____, still more would argue that _____

Useful phrases: Persuading

- Direct Address: We must ensure that .../ we cannot ignore that .../ you must understand that ...
- Anecdote: Just last week, I ... / Whilst ..., I discovered that .../ In fact, this reminds me of ...
- Fact: It cannot be ignored that .../ We must remember that ...
- Opinion: I find myself ... /Every time I think about ..., I ...
- Rhetorical Question: Do we really want a society in which ... ?
- Statistic: A significant number of .../ ... has quadrupled in recent years/... has increased threefold.
- Expert opinion: Dr/Mr/Mrs ... of ... stated .../ CEO of ... reminds us that ...
- Triplet: This is ..., ... and .../ It's ..., it's ... and it's ...

Useful phrases: Conclusion

- Whatever people might say, the heated debate over _____ shows no signs of cooling off.
- Bearing all this in mind, there can be no doubt that the issue of _____ will be the cause of more arguments for many years to come.
- The question of _____ may never be resolved. The two sides will continue to debate _____, _____, and _____, but will probably never agree on the ethics of _____.
e.g. The question of whether or not we should eat meat may never be resolved. The two sides will continue to debate habits, morals and principles, but will probably never agree on the ethics of killing animals for food.
- After considering all the arguments, it seems clear that _____.
- Whilst there is no doubt that _____, surely the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages.

e.g. Whilst there is no doubt that wearing a school uniform has many benefits, surely the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages.

Vocabulary – Useful synonyms/related words

harsh – severe - strict – draconian

e.g. Most people think that execution for stealing would be a draconian punishment.

lenient – benign – compassionate – tolerant – easy-going

e.g. Some people think prison is far too lenient a sentence for murder.

ridiculous – ludicrous – risible – laughable – absurd – preposterous – nonsensical

e.g. The idea of banning mobile phones for teenagers is preposterous.

important – critical – crucial – valuable – vital – paramount – significant

e.g. A critical argument in favour of _____ is ...

harmful – detrimental – negative – adverse – disturbing – unfavourable

e.g. One adverse effect of _____ is ...

beneficial – positive – favourable – valuable – profitable – helpful

e.g. A beneficial outcome of this is ...

effect (noun) – consequence – outcome – repercussion

e.g. One of the many repercussions of this is ...

arguable – contentious – controversial – doubtful – dubious – questionable

e.g. This is a contentious issue and one which demands full consideration.

fatal – lethal – deadly – catastrophic – disastrous

e.g. Such action will only result in disastrous consequences for ...