



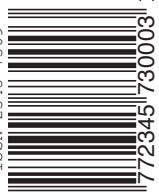
i think

BEYOND BOUNDARIES

OVERLOAD



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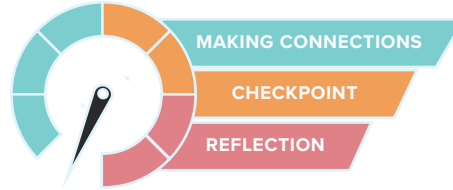
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METACOGNITIVE POINTS



SYMBOLS

FOR ARTICLES IN 'WRITE UP'



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MODEL ME: Do you have an essay that you think is excellent? Or perhaps you could write an original and unpublished essay that has a good structure, organisation, language and style? It could be of any genre and topic of your choice. If your essay is selected, we will publish it under 'Model Me'.

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OUR PUBLICATIONS



OUR DIGITAL READING PLATFORM



Editor's NOTE



Dear Reader,

Have you ever experienced feeling overwhelmed? Perhaps there was too much to study, too many people giving you advice, or simply too many notifications on your social media apps?

Overloaded – that is the result of our fast-paced modern world today. With multiple streams of media and a competitive environment, there is information overload, overemphasis on success, overexploitation of natural resources and various types of obsessions. Is this something we have to live with? Or is there something we can do about this?

We discuss how such overloading can lead to desensitisation, addictions and environmental degradation, and explore ways to manage these issues. Join us on this journey where we attempt to strike a balance and achieve moderation.

Warmly,

Shoba Nair

Chief Editor

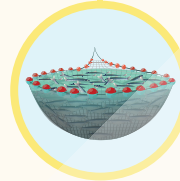
OVEREXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES



Deforestation



Mining



Overfishing



Overgrazing

THE BIG Idea

OVERLOADED

OVEREMPHASIS ON SUCCESS



Materialistic society

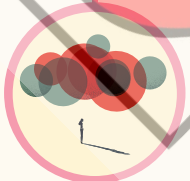


Alternative definitions of success



Competitive economy

OVERLOAD OF INFORMATION



Desensitisation



Impact on health



Reduced productivity

EXCESSIVE DEPENDENCE



Substance abuse



Phone addiction



Workaholism

CONTENTS



WRITEUP

- 07 **D: My Sanctuary in an Overloaded World**
Write about a place you go to relax. Describe how the features of this place help you to feel relaxed.
- 12 **H: Infobesity**
Do you think that an overload of information has caused people to become desensitised to the campaigns by activists? Write about a time when you were involved in an activity to effect change.
- 18 **A1: The Obsession with Success**
'There is an overemphasis on academic and financial success in today's society.' Do you agree? [YES]
- 22 **A2: Widening the Lens on Success**
'There is an overemphasis on academic and financial success in today's society.' Do you agree? [NO]

PICTUREIT

- 25 Text 1 and Text 2

LANGBITES

- 26 Language on Overload

FOLLOWME

- 30 The Forest's Last Breath

HEYLISTEN

- 35 The Blight on Bali's Beautiful Beaches

REACHOUT

- 40 The Formal Speech

SPEAKUP

- 42 Phone Addiction

GROWINGUP

- 45 Overwhelmed?

WANDERLUST

- 47 A Mountain Retreat

WRITE&PUBLISH

- 50 Model Me

- 52 Tweak Me

WORKOUT

- 56 Workout

TRANQUIL SPACES

FEATURES OF SPACES THAT HELP US RELAX

WHAT / PLACES

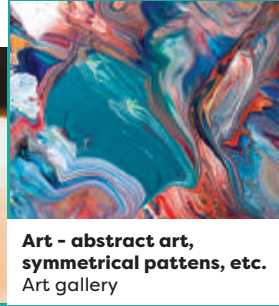
SIGHTS



Greenery
Forest, garden, park



Soft, warm lighting
Café, home

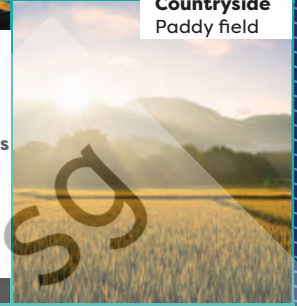


Art - abstract art, symmetrical patterns, etc.
Art gallery



Animals
- koi fish, colourful birds, cows grazing

Pond, bird park, farm

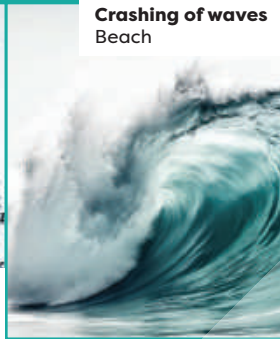


Countryside
Paddy field

SOUNDS



Running water
Water fountains, waterfalls, bathroom shower



Crashing of waves
Beach



Wind chimes
Home, restaurant



Chirping of birds
Bird park, bird lovers corner

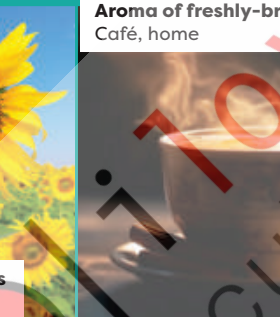


Prayer chants
Temple

SMELL



Sweet smell of flowers
Garden, flower park



Aroma of freshly-brewed coffee
Café, home



Earthy aroma of trees
Forest, park



Salty scent of sea
Beach

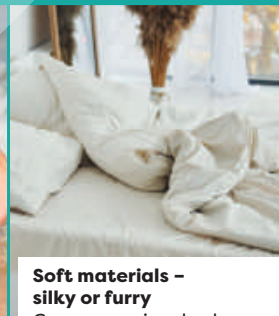
TOUCH



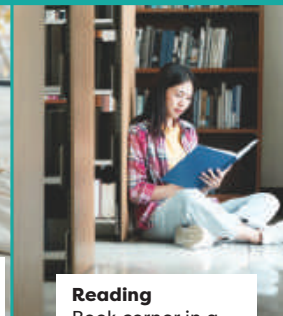
Gentle breeze
Beach, park



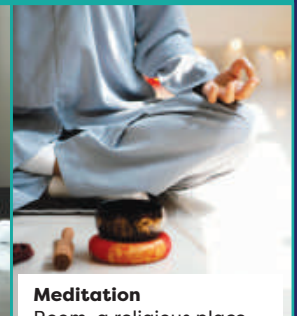
Cool water on our feet
Beach



Soft materials - silky or furry
Cosy corner in a bedroom (with soft cushions)



Reading
Book corner in a house, library



Meditation
Room, a religious place such as a temple

EXPERIENCE

D
DESCRIPTIVE
ESSAY

MY SANCTUARY *in an* OVERLOADED WORLD

By Joy Chen



Write about a place you go to relax. Describe how the features of this place help you to feel relaxed.

Writing
Tips



qrs.ly/d7fm4ke

In a world that never seems to slow down, finding solace becomes a necessity. For me, that solace resides by the shore, at the beach. This is not simply any beach – it is my personal haven, where I seek refuge in times of stress, tension, or when I simply yearn for a break from the ¹incessant buzz of daily life.

The day I stumbled upon my seaside retreat was a ²serendipitous tale in itself. The weight of a demanding semester had been bearing down on me, and late-night study sessions and nerve-wracking group projects had left me drained and anxious. Even after the semester's end, I found myself trapped in a cycle of restless energy within the confines of my room. Fuelled by an impulse to break free, I embarked on an impromptu journey. I headed to the nearest bus station and boarded a random bus, bound for its final stop. As the bus meandered out of the urban labyrinth of my city, I felt my restlessness slowly ³ebbing away. When I finally alighted, I found myself standing on the shores of West Coast Beach. The vastness of the sea before me seemed to wash away my worries. There, amidst the gentle sway of palm trees and the rhythmic lullaby of the waves, I discovered my sanctuary.

The expansive vista stirs my imagination, appealing to my inner romantic, inviting me to daydream without any restraint.

From then on, West Coast Beach has become the place I go to whenever I needed to decompress. The beach offers a kind of peace and quiet that allows me to reconnect with myself.



Its serene ambience is perfectly suited to my introverted disposition, and the solitude I find there is a balm for my soul. Unlike the bustling city streets that overwhelm my senses, the light-hearted atmosphere in the air lifts my spirits and brings clarity to my inner thoughts. Furthermore, I find myself deeply inspired by the wide-open sky, stretching into the horizon like a canvas of limitless possibilities. The expansive vista stirs my imagination, appealing to my inner ⁴romantic, inviting me to daydream without any restraint. I often savour the rare moments when I can lose myself in the clouds or a dazzling sunset. In this space, I can ponder life's complexities, plan my future, or simply revel in the beauty of existence.

METACOGNITIVE POINT
CHECKPOINT

What are my thoughts about the writer's personality at this point?



The beach has proven to be a refuge during numerous challenging times. When the weight of exams presses down upon me, and anxiety threatens to engulf my thoughts, the shore provides a reprieve. Sinking my feet into the warm sand, feeling the caress of the salty sea breeze and listening to the gentle lapping of waves are therapeutic in themselves, as though the beach itself carries away my worries. In moments of tension in relationship matters or at times when I experience an overwhelming ⁵deluge of incessant chatter on social media, the beach offers a safe space to untangle the knots in my mind. Walking along the shore, with the waves washing over my feet, I experience a meditative rhythm that washes away the mental clutter. Here, I can reflect on my thoughts, make sense of my emotions, and find resolution or acceptance.

Although it may be stressful to live in a fast-paced and modern society, it emboldens me to know that I have a place of refuge where the chaos of life's demands recedes. It is a place of tranquillity and rejuvenation where I can find solace, regain my sense of self, and reconnect with the world in a more meaningful way. In this coastal haven, I discover not only peace but also the strength to face the world anew.

WORD BANK

1. **incessant:**
never stopping, especially in an annoying or unpleasant way
2. **serendipitous:**
happening or found by chance
3. **ebbing:**
becomes less strong or disappears
4. **romantic:**
someone who is not practical and has ideas that are not related to real life
5. **deluge:**
a very large volume of something, more than can be managed

METACOGNITIVE POINT REFLECTION

How does my idea of relaxing compare with that of the writer's?

HAVE WE BECOME DESENSITISED TO EFFORTS BY ACTIVISTS?



WHAT IS ACTIVISM?

Activism refers to efforts to bring about a political, social or environmental change in society.

ACTIVISTS FIGHTING FOR A CAUSE

Cause:

Independence for a nation

Type of activism:

March

Example:

The Salt March in 1930 - the first act in Gandhi's nonviolent protest against British rule in India



Image from Yann, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Cause:

Political action on climate crisis

Type of activism:

Strike

Example:

Greta Thunberg's school strike for climate change, which has snowballed into a global movement: "I want you to panic"



Image from Anders Hellberg, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Cause:

Discrimination against the blacks

Type of activism:

Online petition; social media campaign

Example:

The largest petition signed was the call for Justice for George Floyd, who was unfairly killed by a police officer. It later morphed into a social media campaign - #BlackLivesMatter



Image from Chad Davis Flickr/flickr.com

Cause:

Sexual abuse, harassment and rape culture

Type of activism:

Social media campaign

Example:

#MeToo global movement



Image from FabrikaSimf/Shutterstock.com

IS IT ALL TOO MUCH FOR US?



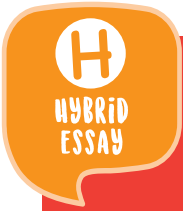
"I deeply care about climate change, but the constant images of the scenarios of climate doom on my social media feed by social media activists are making me feel somewhat less passionate about the cause now." - Janet Tan



"There seems to be too many causes to fight for. Every day, I am faced with people, both in terms of following hashtags on social media as well as signing petitions, asking me to support them in causes ranging from freedom for women and racial discrimination to environmental change and world peace. I feel quite burnt out by these demands on my attention!" - Leslie James



"Just one fight for a cause comes to me in so many different forms - TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, the newspaper, and not to mention discussions with friends and teachers - and all of these in one day! I end up feeling only apathy for the cause now." - Reena Pereira



INFOBESITY

By Zhang Yifei

i love reading
cultivating minds

Writing
Tips



qrs.ly/g6fm4kk



Do you think that an overload of information has caused people to become desensitised to the campaigns by activists? Write about a time when you were involved in an activity to effect change.

As social media and other online news platforms become the main source of information for today's generation, social media activism has been on the rise in the recent decade. As an online form of protest, social media activism easily mobilises and reaches out to people across different regions and different cultures, allowing the voices of the marginalised and disadvantaged to be heard. While this has empowered many to speak up against their circumstances, the overload of information on social media has caused backlashes. As stories of trauma and crises become more accessible through texts, images as well as videos, people in this digital age have become less moved by contents of shock or cruelty. As a result, an overload of information is causing people to become desensitised to activism, and we

should take measures to prevent such outcomes.

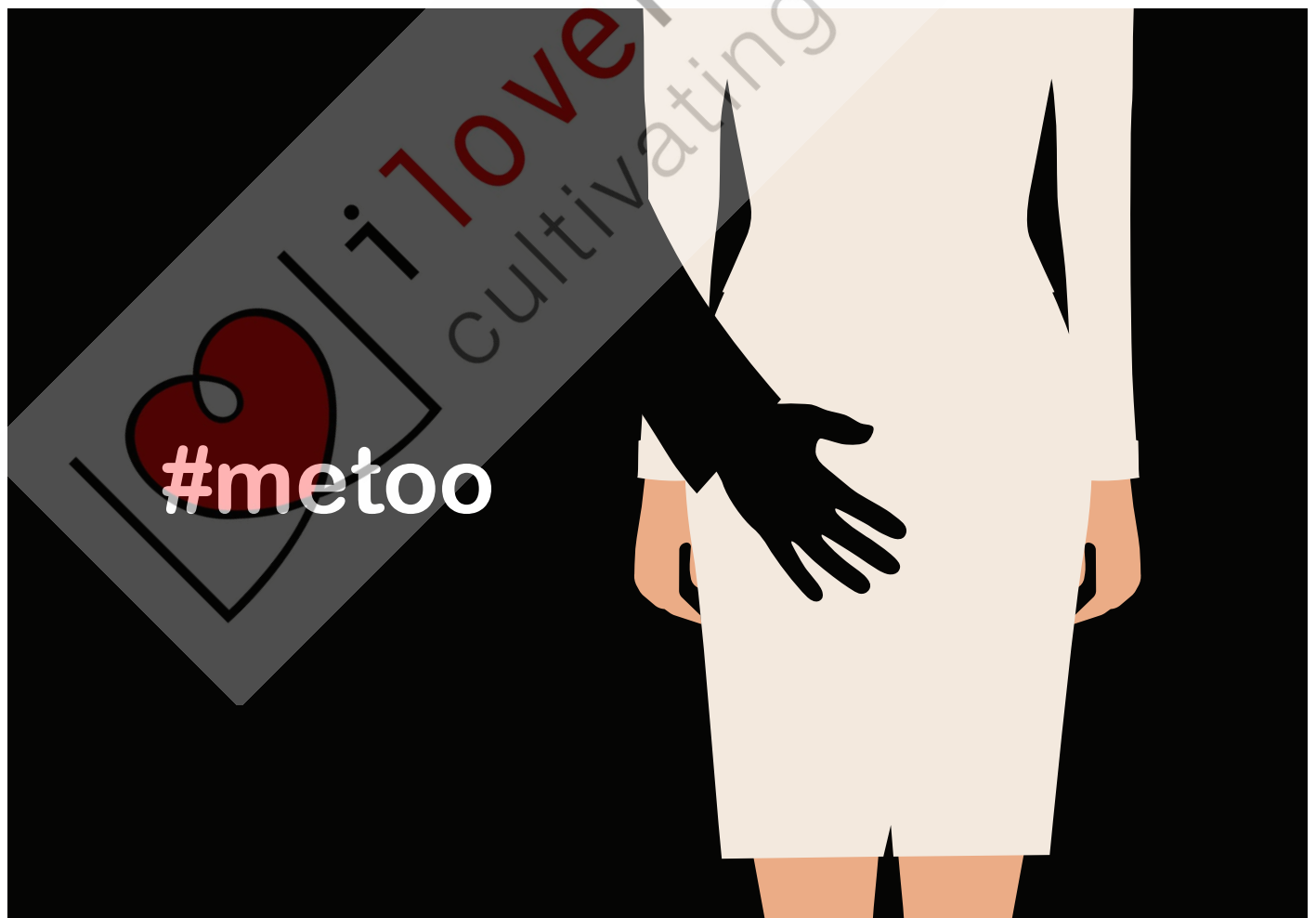
An overexposure to violent and emotionally traumatising content may result in activist burnout. Just as how burnout is usually caused by busy schedules and repetitive tasks, activist burnout is caused by an exhaustion of emotion and empathy. As we view other people's stories of pain, trauma and rage through online platforms, we intuitively empathise with them, sharing and experiencing similar emotions as them. With the constant ¹barrage of information about causes and issues ²bombarding our social media feed every day, we may experience compassion fatigue as a result – we are simply unable to offer our empathy as the world is demanding more empathy than we can possibly offer. As such, we attempt to shun away from information that is distressing – almost as a defence mechanism – and therefore distance ourselves from the initiatives of activists.

METACOGNITIVE POINT
CHECKPOINT

Is there anything I disagree with at this point?

As a fervent advocate of social media activism, I was involved in an online social movement myself. In my attempt to support the #MeToo movement, I read hundreds of stories related to sexual harassment and abuse, forwarding them to my social media page and using the hashtag to raise awareness. The experience of absorbing such narratives of trauma differs significantly from reading them in history books or literary texts. The first-hand accounts of the victims felt much more intimate, visceral and overwhelming. Knowing that the people behind the posts were ordinary people like me made me feel anxious and insecure. At the same time, the number of victims far exceeded my expectations, and it was particularly shocking when I found out that people I was acquainted with had had such experiences before. After a while, I found myself unable to process the texts, simultaneously numbed by the horrifying recounts and deeply burdened by an underlying fear and helplessness.

My friends and I also ran an account for people to anonymously share their stories related to the #MeToo movement and attempted to provide them with as much emotional support as we could. I started to reply to each of the stories with comforting words such as 'You are not alone' and 'We are here for you'. However, as I read the numerous stories sent by strangers about their nightmarish experiences, I increasingly started to spend more time trying to think of how I could respond differently. I felt that the experiences were all fairly similar, and I soon ended up replying mechanically using the same set of phrases. I also began to feel drained, and even dread, as every day my account had a new list of stories – I started experiencing compassion fatigue. When I realised that my empathy for the victims started diminishing, I was horrified and frankly, disgusted, with myself. I decided to take a break from running the account. For a while, I even shut myself out from all social media platforms and news applications,



struggling to create a vacuum where no negative news would ever reach me. I rejoined my friends in running the account only after a month, but this time, we decided to take turns to check and reply to the stories, so that no one experienced a burnout.

We live in a time of ⁴precarity, threatened by both political instabilities and natural disasters. Information overload on social media and other online platforms has magnified our sense of insecurity, resulting in compassion fatigue and activist burnout. Luckily for me, I was surrounded by a community of like-minded individuals who affirmed my actions and motivated me. Thus, I believe that it is important for us to recognise the potential risks inherent in the digital age we live in and seek solutions to overcome our desensitisation. Although the effort of an individual appears futile in the face of global catastrophes, we should, nevertheless, stay passionate to fight on as activists.



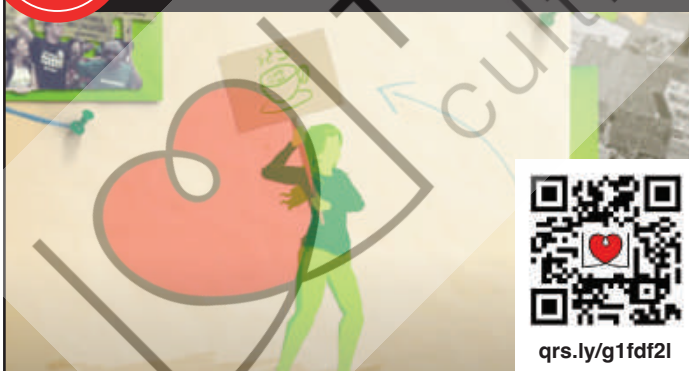
WORD BANK

1. **barrage:**
an overwhelming number of questions, criticisms, complaints, etc., delivered simultaneously or in rapid succession
2. **bombarding:**
subjecting (someone) to a continuous flow of questions, criticisms, or information
3. **fervent:**
having or displaying a passionate intensity
4. **precarity:**
the state of being uncertain

WATCH



Do hashtags and petitions actually work?



Source is relevant at the time of publishing

Are there any ethical concerns about how activists present their messages?

think

METACOGNITIVE POINT
REFLECTION

What are some insights I have gained from this read?

ARE YOU SUCCESSFUL?

What does success really mean?

Financial Stability

financial security for a comfortable lifestyle

Personal Fulfilment

pursuing passions, eg, baking, travelling, playing music

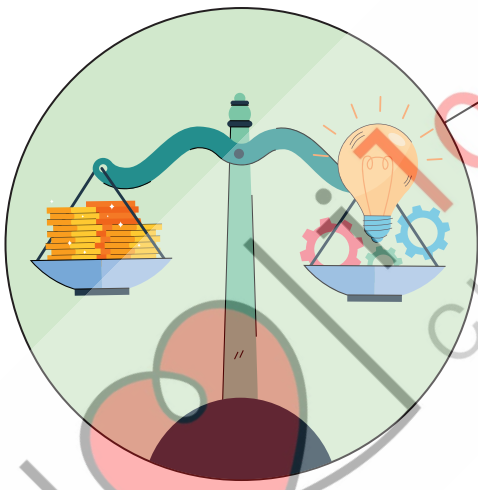


Career Progress

climbing the corporate ladder; growing a successful business



Types of Success



Work-Life Balance

having enough time off work to care for elderly parents, young children or to pursue personal goals



Positive Relationships

building and maintaining a supportive social network of family and friends

Impact and Contribution to Society

making a difference in the lives of others, eg, advocating the rights of women, protecting the rights of children, promoting environmental consciousness

Concept of Success

Differs from Society to Society



Asian Societies

“Success is determined by high educational qualifications and holding high positions in one’s career”



Western Societies

“Creative pursuits and entrepreneurship spell success in life.”

Differs from Person to Person



“Success is a highly personal concept - a person’s view of success depends on their personal values and belief systems.”

Differs from Generation to Generation



Generation X

“Financial stability and progress in our career are important to us.”



Millennials

“Achieving a good work-life balance is what we term as success in life.”

Changes with Time

As a person goes through different life experiences, their perceptions of success can evolve.

In one’s 20s: a focus on accumulating more wealth



In middle age: a focus on personal fulfilment



A

ARGUMENTATIVE
ESSAY

THE OBSESSION WITH SUCCESS

'There is an overemphasis on academic and financial success in today's society.' Do you agree?

YES

By Sng Ee Ping



Writing
Tips



qrs.ly/e4fm4kc



...acceptance into English, history and philosophical studies in British universities has seen a decrease of up to 30 percent from 2011 to 2020, whereas acceptance into computer science courses has increased by almost 50 percent.

Elon Musk. J.K. Rowling. Taylor Swift. What do these people have in common? They are all highly successful individuals who have inspired many people around the world. People pursue success because it motivates them towards realising their dreams. Besides material benefits, success can elevate a person's confidence and give them a sense of fulfilment. However, we live in a hyper-competitive world today, where success for a young person is often narrowly defined as obtaining good academic grades and getting into top schools. For an adult, the quintessential sign of success is cash, a successful career and for some, status and power. Regrettably, there is an overemphasis on academic and financial success in our society today that can be detrimental to individuals as well as our society.

The overemphasis on academic success is ubiquitous in many places around the world. The

booming tuition industry is a testament to parents' strong belief that academic success will cement students' opportunities in getting into top schools. According to the Household Expenditure Survey (HES) in 2017/18, Singapore households spent a staggering S\$1.4 billion on tuition, an increase from S\$1.1 billion in 2012/13. In China, children are placed on an endless conveyor belt of enrichment classes and private tuition because of the intense pressure to succeed. In some countries such as South Korea, academic success is equivalent to socioeconomic status. South Korean students are ingrained with the attitude of working hard with the ultimate goal of clinching a place in Ivy League universities. The 2014 Youth Happiness Index found that only 67.6 percent of South Korean youth (much less than the average of other countries surveyed) said they were satisfied with their life, with the unhappiness largely attributed to the intense pressure to achieve good grades in school. Academic success, though important, has become a brutal rat race in today's society.



An overemphasis on financial success is evident in how many people opt to make their career choices in science and technology rather than the humanities. A career in the field of humanities is generally comparatively less financially rewarding than that in STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. A Pew research study found that in 2019, the median annual earnings of workers in a STEM job was about US\$77,400, whereas in non-STEM occupations it was only US\$46,900. Many parents as well as students shun subjects such as art, history, literature and philosophy – subjects which foster critical thinking and a deeper understanding of human experiences – preferring instead to pursue STEM subjects due to projected financial gains. Data from Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) mirrors this worrying trend, reporting that acceptance into English, history and philosophical studies in British universities has seen a decrease of up to 30 percent from 2011 to 2020, whereas acceptance into computer science courses has increased by almost 50 percent in the same period. The overemphasis on financial success has thus led to a narrow mindset, with choices of careers being limited to only those promising greater material benefits.

Despite society's overemphasis on academic and financial success, we have to admit that there is a growing number of millennials who are choosing the road less travelled, valuing work-life balance, freedom and personal satisfaction over society's cherished

WORD BANK

notions of success. Stories of young people making academic and career choices that do not necessarily translate into high financial rewards are well documented in newspapers and magazines. However, social media is ³replete with success stories of profitable exits from start-ups and rapid climbs through corporations. Comparison is inevitable and the millennials' ⁴quixotic ideas will be put to the test in the crucible of hyperinflation, escalating home prices and an uncertain job market. ⁵When push comes to shove, these millennials may well succumb to societal comparison and pressure to ⁶keep up with the Joneses.

While there is nothing wrong in pursuing academic and financial success, an obsession with this narrow definition of success does come at a hefty price – a toll on our mental health and a myopic view of life. Just as the ⁷untethered minority is rejecting societal expectations and seeking the kind of success that works best for them, it is perhaps time for the rest of us to shift our perspective and pursue a truly successful life that is founded on relationships and meaning, not on material achievements.

1. **quintessential:**
being the most typical example or most important part of something
2. **ubiquitous:**
found or existing everywhere
3. **replete:**
well-supplied
4. **quixotic:**
having or showing ideas that are different and unusual but not practical or likely to succeed
5. **when push comes to shove:**
when all easy answers to a problem have not worked, and something else must be tried
6. **keep up with the Joneses:**
to always want to own the same expensive objects as your neighbours and friends, because you are worried about seeming less socially important than they are
7. **untethered:**
not staying or forced to stay in one particular place

Reference:

1. South Korean education ranks high, but it's the kids who pay, by The Conversation, 30 March 2015.
2. STEM vs Arts, a battle that leaves liberal arts behind, from the Teen Magazine, 20 May 2021.
3. What Pew Research Center found about the STEM workforce, from EiE, 1 December 2021.
4. Tuition has ballooned to a S\$1.4b industry in Singapore. Should we be concerned? From Today, 30 September 2019.
5. Students turn to technology with university choices, from UCAS, 4 February 2021.



Source is relevant at the time of publishing

METACOGNITIVE POINT
CHECKPOINT

What assumptions am I making as I read this?



WIDENING THE LENS ON SUCCESS

‘There is an overemphasis on academic and financial success in today’s society.’ Do you agree?

NO

By Sng Ee Ping

Traditionally, success has been defined in terms of money, power and status. We live in a success-oriented world where the glitter of success captivates many to pursue it at all costs. Some argue that an overemphasis on success in our society is responsible for the increasing mental health concerns and the neglect of important values such as happiness and health. However, I believe that our society is gradually moving away from the conventional definition of success and placing more emphasis on personal fulfillment and happiness. Hence, I do not think that there is an overemphasis on academic and financial success in today's society.

Academic success is of great importance in today's modern society, but the obsession with it may not be common for all. In countries where values such as creativity and independence are highly regarded, academic success is not over-emphasised. In Finland, a country that has been hailed as a successful model of education, there are no mandatory standardised tests apart from one examination at the end of the senior year in high school. There are also no rankings, as well as no comparisons or competition among students and schools. Compulsory schooling does not begin until age seven, and homework is minimal, with an emphasis on play and creativity in the early years. There is a clear focus on students' wellbeing and engagement in learning, and educators focus on teaching students how to learn and not simply prepare for assessments. Some

countries are taking the cue from Finland. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has reduced school-based assessments with the removal of mid-year examinations for all levels in primary and secondary schools; Japan has reduced the amount of homework, thus reducing the academic stress placed on their students. With an increasing recognition of the need to reduce stress among students and inculcate values such as creativity, academic success is less amplified.

More young people are now also resisting the traditional notions of success. To them, success is measured according to the quality of their lives and the social value of the work they do. In the United States, a 2016 Millennials Survey by Deloitte revealed that millennials favour work-life balance and a flexible schedule over career progression. The survey also highlighted their need for some form of social and personal meaning in their work. These millennials are more likely willing to forgo a luxurious lifestyle because to them, success is not defined by the size of their paycheck. A 2023 Milieu Insight survey for The Straits Times revealed that 58 percent of Singaporean millennials prioritise work-life balance over career progress and pay, citing concerns with managing work with other priorities such as looking after their elderly parents and young children. These results reveal that young people in our society are placing less emphasis on the traditional signposts of success. Financial success is clearly not the prime driving force for the young millennials.



Stories abound of young people who drop out of college to start their own businesses, and of lawyers and bankers who decide to pursue other presumably less financially rewarding careers such as counselling and writing.

While there are positive signs that our society is shifting away from an overemphasis on traditional notions of success, it can be argued that our society remains awed by material gains and status. The world celebrated Mark Zuckerberg for achieving billionaire status at age 23. Forbes 30 under 30 continues to capture global attention about the success of young overachievers. Nevertheless, our society is changing, and many are looking for more than simply ¹the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. More people are seeking meaning and fulfilment in life. It is not uncommon to hear stories of people leaving high-paying jobs to pursue their passion and some are giving their time to volunteer for social causes. The pandemic ignited the Great Resignation where many people left lucrative careers at reputable organisations such as Netflix and Canva after discovering that they wanted to do something more meaningful than their current work. Stories abound of young people who drop out of college to start their own businesses, and of lawyers and bankers who decide to pursue other presumably less financially rewarding careers such as counselling and writing. With such changing mindsets, today's society cannot be easily labelled as one that is obsessed with academic and financial success.

Societal standards of success are shifting. The glitter on success is losing its shine as people discover that they can find ²joie de vivre when they stop searching for success and instead, seek fulfilment in the things they do.

WORD BANK

- 1. the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow:**
something that is very attractive that you will probably never achieve
- 2. joie de vivre:**
a feeling of great happiness and enjoyment

References:

1. How millennials are changing how we view success, from Forbes, 30 December 2016.
2. Leading by example: 13 graduates who quit lucrative jobs to change the world for the better, from Indiatimes.
3. Why are Finland's Schools successful? From Smithsonian, September 2011.
4. Why I quit: 6 people who left high-paying jobs or school to pursue passions share their advice, from Business Insider, 23 August 2022.
5. What else is left but work-life balance? S'pore millennials are redefining work, survey shows, from The Straits Times, 2 October 2023.

WATCH

Gen Z workers in a 'passion crisis' while finding meaning in jobs: Expert

UNHAPPY AT WORK

26% GEN Z	13% MILLENNIALS	13% GEN X
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WHY GEN Z IS CHALLENGING WORKPLACE NORMS

qrs.ly/7cfdg7

Source is relevant at the time of publishing



METACOGNITIVE POINT REFLECTION

Has my definition of success changed?

Text 1 is taken from an online advertising campaign on doing a digital detox.



Phone-Free Food - reclaim the meal table back from your phones! Dedicate the month of October to eating without your phones on the meal table, switched on or even in sight!

(modified image and text from <https://www.its timetologoff.com/digital-detox-campaigns/>)

Text 2 is taken from a blog post on parenting.

Mealtimes are an excellent time to bond with people, be they family or friends. Sitting together for meals gives us a great opportunity to talk – how could we let our phones take that away, this basic human joy of connecting with each other? About two years ago, phones became out of bounds at the dinner table, and although it was a little difficult in the beginning, my children soon got used to it. Nowadays, dinner time is when they chat freely about their day, and we have since become a lot closer as a family.

(modified from www.sane.org: Jessica Kayden)



LANGUAGE ON OVERLOAD

IDIOMS AND PHRASES TO DESCRIBE BEING OVERLOADED



Spread yourself too thin

To take on too many tasks or responsibilities, making it difficult to do any of them well



Burning the candle on both ends

Working excessively or staying up late to the point of exhaustion



On the brink of a breakdown

Being very close to experiencing a physical or emotional breakdown due to stress



Bite off more than you can chew

To take on more tasks or responsibilities than one can realistically handle

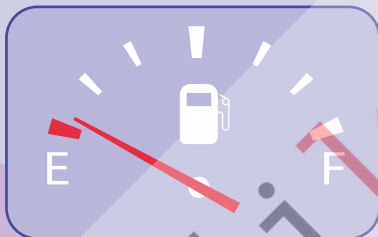
Up to my neck in work

Having too much work or too many responsibilities



At the end of my rope

To feel exhausted and incapable of handling any more stress or problems



Running on empty

To function with little or no energy or resources left due to excessive demands



Snowed under

To be overwhelmed by a large amount of work or tasks

PHRASES TO DESCRIBE INFORMATION OVERLOAD

deluge of information

flooded with information

sea of information

information jungle

digital noise

tsunami of data

DEFORESTATION

REASONS



Insatiable international demand for agricultural and animal products

- expansion of area for farming and rearing of cattle



International and local industrial demands

- mining of aluminium, steel, nickel and copper
eg, mining project in eastern Amazon



IMPACT

Loss of homes

- locals can lose their homes
eg, indigenous tribes who dwell in the forest
- animals lose their habitat



Habitat degradation

- landscapes are fragmented with deforestation: more prone to fire and droughts



More poverty

- locals are less able to depend on natural resources for their daily living



Greater release of carbon dioxide

- fewer forests left to absorb the carbon dioxide and more carbon dioxide released from burning trees



Loss of biodiversity

- variety of plant and animal species dwindle, with some species even going extinct



THE FOREST'S LAST BREATH

By Neha Thantry

Love reading.
Cultivating minds.





“Kara, have you ever seen the forest breathe?”

1 “Kara, have you ever seen the forest breathe?”

I found myself recalling my grandfather’s voice as I lay on the bank of the Amazon River that grazed my village.

5 “What do you mean, Grandpa?” I had asked him, not quite understanding the depth of his question but still wide-eyed and hanging on to every word he said.

He had pointed towards the towering trees surrounding us, their leaves swaying gently in the breeze.

10 “I mean, have you ever felt it, Kara? The pulse of the forest, its heartbeat? It’s like it’s alive.”

2 As a nine-year-old child, I had nodded along eagerly, but it was only now, almost a decade since that moment, that I truly grasped what he meant.

15 As I gazed at the emerald ¹tapestry above me that stretched as far as the eye could see, it felt as if the forest had a soul, and every rustling leaf and chirping bird was a testament to its ²vitality.

20 Suddenly, a loud whirring noise jerked me back to the present, where the once soothing sounds of the rainforest were increasingly being drowned out by a ³dissonant symphony of destruction: roaring chainsaws and bulldozers.

I turned to look at my brother, who had **3** been silently napping next to me but was now ²⁵ wide awake, his eyebrows furrowed in frustration. Diego and I had grown up together, witnessing the interdependence between our people and this enchanted wilderness. The trees sheltered us, the river fed us, and the ³⁰ countless plant species provided medicines that were passed down through generations. In return, our community, the ⁴indigenous stewards of this land, had revered and protected it for centuries. However, in the past ³⁵ few years, we had begun to see this harmony unravel before our eyes.

“I feel horrible just sitting here while our **4** home crumbles,” I said to Diego, knowing that he shared my ⁵indignation. ⁴⁰

Compelled by the urge to act but not knowing what to do, we cautiously started walking towards the source of the ⁶cacophony. The whirring noises in the distance grew louder and we could feel the forces of de- ⁴⁵ forestation creep closer like a predatory beast stalking its prey. Fear clung to us like the humidity in the air.

METACOGNITIVE POINT
CHECKPOINT

What questions do I have about the story at this point?

5 The moment I first witnessed the logging site was
50 a scene that was forever etched into my memory. Ma-
chines, colossal and relentless, were tearing through the
forest, their jaws biting into ancient trees. The once-pris-
tine wilderness was now marked by fallen giants, and
the air was thick with the acrid scent of burning wood.

55 Amidst the chaos, something caught my eye – a co-
lossal Kapok tree, standing still and mighty in the path
of a bulldozer. This towering sentinel of a tree had stood
in its place for centuries, braving countless floods and
unforgiving rainstorms. As I realised that the powerful
60 clunk of machinery would nonetheless defeat this force
of nature, a combination of anger, grief and a fierce
sense of determination grew inside of me, and without
thinking, I threw myself in front of the tree.

“Stop this!” I yelled with my arms akim- **6**
bo, trying to draw attention to my small 65
frame in the face of the towering bulldozer.
Having spotted me, the logger jerked his
machine to a halt, a mere few metres away
from the tree. Time stood still for a few
seconds as I glanced around at the horri- 70
fied looks of everyone in the area, from the
loggers to the indigenous elders who had
gathered to bear witness to the destruction.
With bated breath, I braced myself for the
whir of the machinery to start up again, dis- 75
regarding my cries. Then, I felt someone
grab my hand and another voice – Diego’s
– joined mine.



7 “You can’t destroy our forest! This is our land!”
 80 he shouted. I offered him a feeble smile of grati-
 tude for joining my fight and noticed more people
 from our community joining us to form a barrier
 around the tree. My voice now indistinguishable
 85 from the chorus of defiance echoing through the
 forest, I thought back once again to my grandfa-
 ther’s words and felt that we, humans, were just
 as much a part of the Amazon’s lifeblood as the
 twittering birds, coursing rivers and lush flora,
 90 our hearts beating ⁷synchronously to keep one
 another alive and thriving.

8 The loggers, initially taken aback by our sud-
 den determination, responded with threats and
 hostility. They pushed us back, blades inching
 closer and closer to the Kapok tree. As the con-
 95 frontation escalated, it became a battle not only
 for the forest but for the very essence of our ex-
 istence. The tree symbolised our resilience, our
 connection to the land, and our commitment to
 preserving the legacy of our people. We could not
 100 let it fall.

When the loggers conceded that we would
 not budge, they brought their machinery to a
 standstill once again and I thought that our voic-
 es had finally been heard, and the day’s fight
 was coming to an end. Alas, they simply chose ¹⁰⁵
 to re-pivot their deforestation efforts to the other
 trees that surrounded us, and we quickly realised
 that we were outnumbered and would never be
 able to shield all the trees.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, the ¹¹⁰
 shadow of the lone Kapok tree loomed over
 the smouldering ⁸carcasses of trees that had
 crashed to the ground. While we had won
 the battle to protect this ancient piece of our
 heritage, we were losing the war to preserve the ¹¹⁵
 forest at large. In the fading light, the forest wept
 with the anguished cries of the birds and animals
 that had once thrived here. Huddled together and
 exhausted, many of us in tears, we were left only
 with a heart-wrenching sense of helplessness ¹²⁰
 as we watched the Amazon, our home, fade into
 the darkness.

...we, humans, were just as much a part of the Amazon’s lifeblood as the twittering birds, coursing rivers and lush flora...





WORD BANK

- 1. tapestry:**
a piece of cloth with a pattern or picture that is created by sewing or weaving different coloured threads onto a special type of strong cloth; something that is made of many different parts
- 2. vitality:**
energy and strength
- 3. dissonant:**
sounding strange or unpleasant
- 4. indigenous:**
used to refer to, or relating to, the people who originally lived in a place, rather than people who moved there from somewhere else
- 5. indignation:**
anger about a situation that you think is wrong or not fair
- 6. cacophony:**
an unpleasant mixture of loud sounds
- 7. synchronously:**
in a way that involves things happening or being done at the same time or speed
- 8. carcasses:**
dead bodies of animals

WATCH



Indonesia capital: Indigenous Borneo islanders face displacement



Source is relevant at the time of publishing

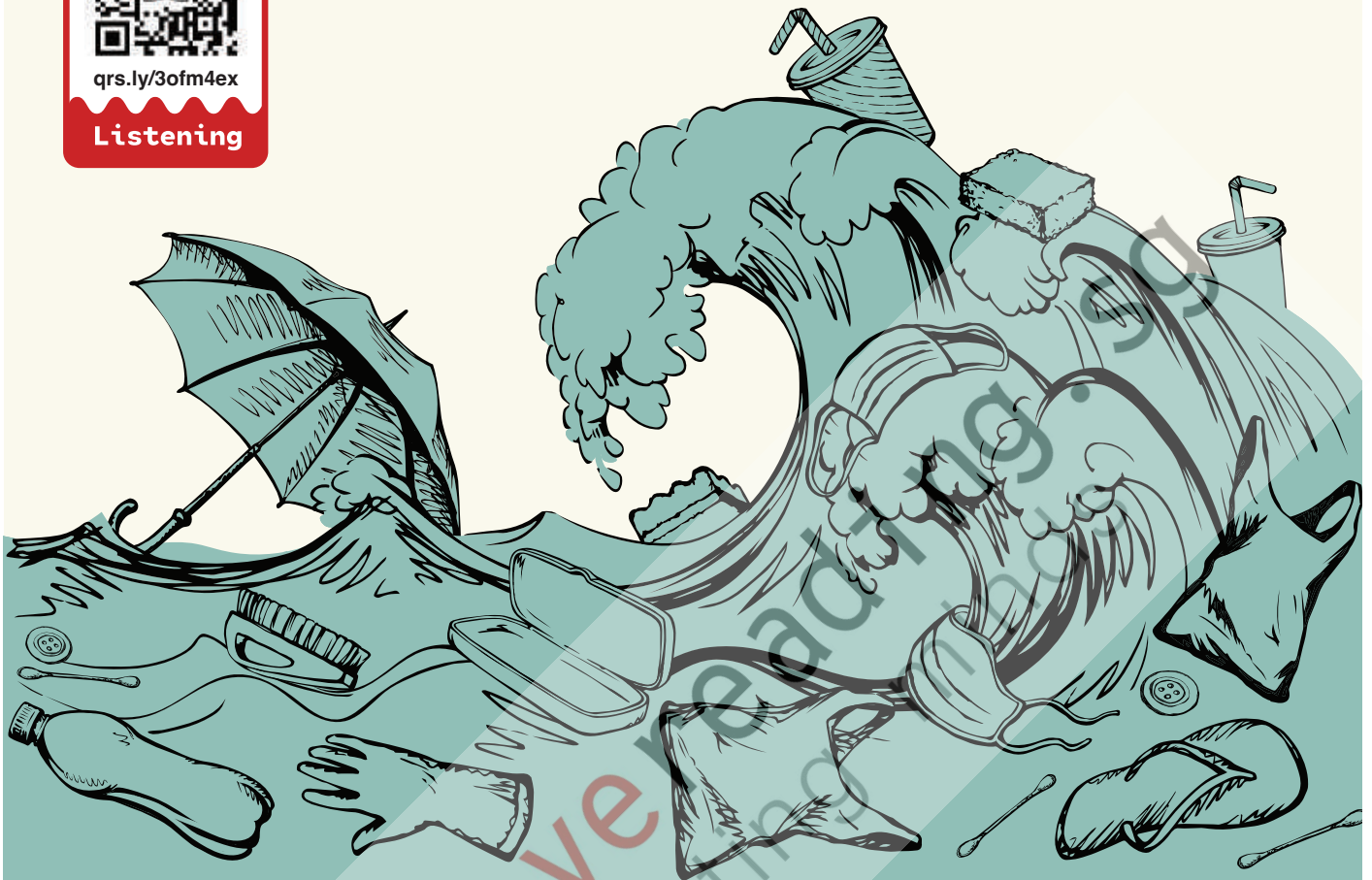
View the video here.
The Indonesian government's decision to change the capital of Indonesia from congested Jakarta to Nusantara has received mixed reviews, as shown in the video. What are your views on the government's move?



METACOGNITIVE POINT
REFLECTION



How do I feel about the events in the story?



The Blight on

Bali's

Beautiful Beaches

By Norashikin Mohamad

An environmental activist talks to a group of students about Bali's plastic pollution.



Today, I will be sharing an issue that is close to my heart – plastic pollution. It is no secret that this has become one of the most pressing environmental issues affecting many countries, particularly those in Asia and Africa. Of special interest to me is the plastic problem that has plagued Bali, an island in Indonesia.

Known for its picturesque landscapes and vibrant culture, Bali or the 'Island of the Gods', is home to approximately four million people. It is also the choice travel destination for millions of visitors from all over the world. You must think that this is great, don't you? After all, the tourism industry contributes to economic growth. Well, beneath the surface of this beautiful haven lurks an irksome environmental issue which

threatens to mar Bali's reputation as a tourist destination. I'd often wondered how dire the situation was and on a recent trip with my fellow colleagues from the College of Environmental Science, my curiosity was satisfied. I must say that the answers to the many burning questions I had pointed at circumstances that may potentially threaten both the economy and well-being of the inhabitants of Bali.

During my trip, I learnt that tourism is one of the key contributors to plastic pollution in Bali. The reason for this is that visitors discard single-use plastic items such as

bags and food containers indiscriminately, which unfortunately find their way to the ocean. No prizes for guessing what happens next – these plastic items may be consumed by marine life, much to their detriment. These items may also end up on the beaches, washed up by the tide. It's no wonder that Bali's once pristine shores are now littered. By now, you may be wondering about the waste management system in Bali. After all, if there is a proper system to address plastic disposal, the problem may be mitigated. Those were my initial thoughts prior to my trip. I soon realised that limited recycling facilities and improper disposal methods have exacerbated the problem. How so? Much of the plastic waste remains unprocessed, often ending up in landfills, rivers and coastal areas.

Needless to say, the impact of plastic pollution on Bali's environment is of great concern to the authorities. Besides being ingested by marine

life, the plastics also disintegrate into microplastics, which may potentially find their way into our food chain. I am rather disturbed by the thought of human beings consuming food items that may contain plastics. It pains me to think of the dire consequences that may befall mankind.

I also realised that the heavy reliance on tourism as a revenue-generating industry has impacted the locals negatively in some ways. This is very much an irony. The once-picturesque beaches are now strewn with rubbish and this situation has resulted in a reduction in the number of tourists as they are turned off by the unsightly surroundings. This has harmed the local economy. Earlier, I'd mentioned that waste management facilities are lacking in Bali, and this has led to another problem – the waterways may be congested, thus contributing to flooding during the rainy season. Once again, the lives of the locals are adversely impacted.

You would be happy to know, as I am, that there are concrete steps being taken currently to address the issue of plastic pollution. People, both adults and children alike, organise and participate in initiatives such as plastic clean-up campaigns and awareness programmes on responsible plastic use. The use of biodegradable packaging and reusable containers has also become more popular. It remains to be seen how successful these efforts will be in the bid to fight against plastic pollution.



WATCH

Our campaign to ban plastic bags in Bali

qrs.ly/qsdfhz

Source is relevant at the time of publishing

Is there any environmental concern you have about your country? What can be done about it?

HARMONY SECONDARY SCHOOL

SOCIAL RECREATION CLUB
SUGGESTIONS FOR AFTER-SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES YEAR 2024



Gardening

An adventure amidst lush greenery and vibrant blooms



- Follow a step-by-step guide on planting, watering and caring for the plants in the school garden.



- Learn all about hydroponics – soilless method of growing plants in a nutrient-rich water solution.



- Participate in the distribution of harvests among staff and students.



Learning how to cook

A culinary experience that will tantalise your taste buds



- Try mouthwatering recipes suitable for all skill levels.



- Learn ways of selecting the freshest ingredients for culinary success.



- Follow a step-by-step guide to mastering essential cooking techniques.

Playing board games

A journey into a world of creativity and strategy



- Escape from the digital world and into a safe space where face-to-face interactions prevail.



- Be spoilt for choice with the treasure trove of board games available, suitable for all ages and skill levels.



- Forge new friendships.

The Question

By Norashikin Mohamad

You should look at the information sheet on the previous page. Study the information carefully and plan your answer before beginning to write.

The Social Recreation Club in your school seeks to encourage students to participate in recreational activities during the after-school hours, aimed at relieving stress. The committee members of the club have come up with three possible activities and as Chairperson of the club, you have been tasked by the principal to select one suitable activity that will appeal to the students. You are to present your suggestion in a speech to the School Management Committee.

Write your speech, stating clearly:

- which activity you have selected and why
- how the activity will be conducted, including how the club members will be involved
- how the activity will be engaging and relaxing for the students.

You may add any other details you think will be helpful.

Write your speech in clear, accurate English. Your tone should be enthusiastic and persuasive.

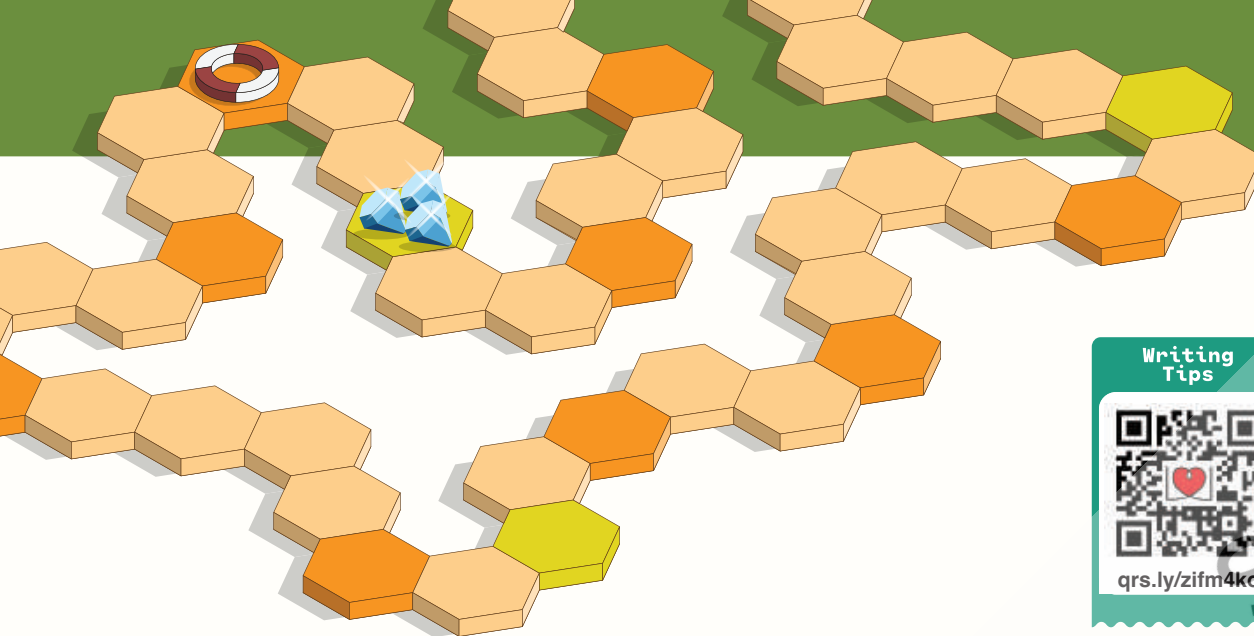
You should **use your own words** as much as possible.

The Formal Speech

Good morning, members of the School Management Committee. I am Eliza Chan, Chairperson of the Social Recreation Club. Recently, my committee members and I discussed possible activities for the students to participate in during the after-school hours. I am pleased to share with you today my suggestion on a recreational activity that seeks to engage the students and provide them with an avenue to relax: playing board games.

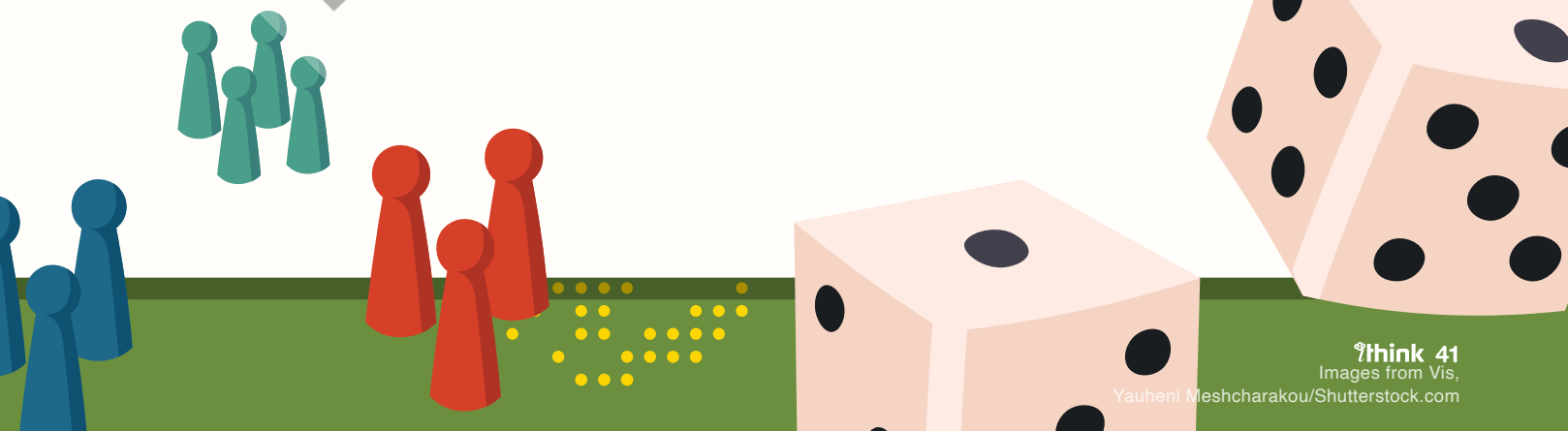
Playing board games is a popular activity among many, both the young and the young at heart. The availability of a large variety of such games leaves us spoilt for choice, whether we enjoy playing strategy or word games. In this regard, I feel that a suitable after-school recreational activity is playing board games as there are different games that can cater to the interests of the students. Those who wish to indulge in wordplay may choose to play a game of Scrabble while others may want to realise their dreams of being real estate developers in Monopoly. Whatever their interest may be, I believe that there is a suitable board game that can engage them for hours on end, providing them with entertainment and fun in a safe and welcoming school environment.

In coming up with this suggestion, my committee members and I have carefully considered the suitability of different areas in the school compound where the students can play the board games. The Social Recreation Club room has an inviting corner that currently houses a sofa set, a coffee table and a cabinet. I would like to suggest that this area be designated as the board game corner. The sofa set and coffee table would prove useful to the students as they gather to play games or watch others as they play. The cabinet would provide useful storage space for the games. This activity will be managed by the members of the Social Recreation Club who will be stationed at the board game corner during the stipulated after-school hours to ensure that the house rules are adhered to. I believe that a duration of three hours per school day is sufficient for the students to pit their skills and knowledge against one another in a battle of the board games. Given that this will be an initiative that is managed by the Social Recreation Club, it will not be available during the school holidays.



The students may choose to form teams to play a friendly competition, and this encourages face-to-face social interaction, particularly if they make attempts to partner others of different ages and levels. Teachers can also be invited to join the students in playing the board games, encouraging the forging of stronger bonds between teachers and students. Through this activity, the student population can foster new friendships and build camaraderie, which will create a positive school culture. Board games are also an avenue for the students to escape from reality, even if it is only for a few hours. As board games do not require any digital device, players are able to effectively avoid any digital distractions that may create anxiety in them. Many have shared that they experience high levels of stress due to the academic demands placed on them as well as the pressure of maintaining their image on social media. Playing board games gives them something relaxing to do to enable them to unwind after attending lessons, instead of scrolling through Instagram posts and reels. Even as they do so, they are provided with opportunities to develop creativity and unleash their imagination, particularly if the games they choose to play require storytelling and role-playing. I am sure that the students would welcome this activity as the perfect way to spend their after-school hours.

In a world where people are constantly surrounded by digital technology, board games provide a welcome respite and an opportunity for the students to reconnect with others through face-to-face interactions. I hope to witness the fruition of my suggestion and play a part in providing our student population with the much-needed avenue to relax as they pit their skills in board games that interest them. With that, I thank you.



PHONE ADDICTION

By Rebecca Yap

A student from the Social Welfare Club talks to her schoolmates about phone addiction.



Read Aloud



qrs.ly/4rfm4eq

Imagine walking back home from school under the sweltering heat, pining for an icy, refreshing drink to cool yourself down after a long day at school. You whip out your phone, open the Instagram application and begin your page-long rant berating the tropical climate you call home.

How many of us admit to carrying out these exact steps daily? If you find your life revolving around the latest iPhone and experiencing your 'best' moments over a 5.5-inch LED screen, this talk could be just for you!

In an era engrossed in technology, it is difficult to deny that phone addiction has ¹surreptitiously crept into our teenhood. One's life is lived vicariously through ²parasocial relationships, short video reels and a ³barrage of beauty filters and Question and Answer stickers that offer strangers a glimpse into your private life.



The effects of phone addiction may not manifest immediately, though. A single night spent scrolling on your phone past bedtime accumulates, eventually snowballing into a sleep debt that causes fatigue, exhaustion and irritability. The ⁴hallmark of addiction is a toddler throwing a prolonged tantrum when his device is taken away from him during meal times. We have certainly witnessed scenes like this at restaurants and homes, haven't we?

Knowing that addiction is prevalent is not enough, of course – we need to know how to manage it. Let me share with you two ways you can do this. First, you can seek support from a trusted adult or friend to hold you accountable for your phone usage. This could mean surrendering your phone to them, or having a work-to-rest ratio assigned for the day. Or, you can join a recreational club such as a chess club or an astronomy interest group. Better yet, you can engage in some outdoor sports activities such as basketball or football, or simply go for a jog. Think about that endorphin boost at the end of your workout!

Ultimately, it's about achieving the right balance between enjoying screen time and occupying yourself with other in-person activities. My challenge to you is simply this – beat the urge to use your phone, and seek the world beyond!

WORD BANK

1. **surreptitiously:**
secretly, without anyone seeing or knowing
2. **parasocial:**
involving or relating to a connection between a person and someone they do not know personally, for example, a famous person or a character
3. **barrage:**
a great number directed at someone
4. **hallmark:**
typical characteristic or feature of a person or thing



qrs.ly/7bfizoq

Talking Point



00:00

-01:00



PLANNED RESPONSE

Do you think parents should control the amount of time their teenage child spends on gaming? Why do you say so?

SPOKEN INTERACTION

1. What suggestions do you have for a friend who is trying to overcome their gaming addiction?
2. Do you think retirees are more obsessed with their phones than teenagers? Why or why not?



Suggested Response



qrs.ly/8tfm4es

OVERWHELMED?

How to cope when it is all too much?

By Shoba Nair



From time to time, you may experience intense emotions, of disappointment, sadness, frustration, even helplessness. You may hear your friends tell you to “get a grip on yourself”. What does that really mean?

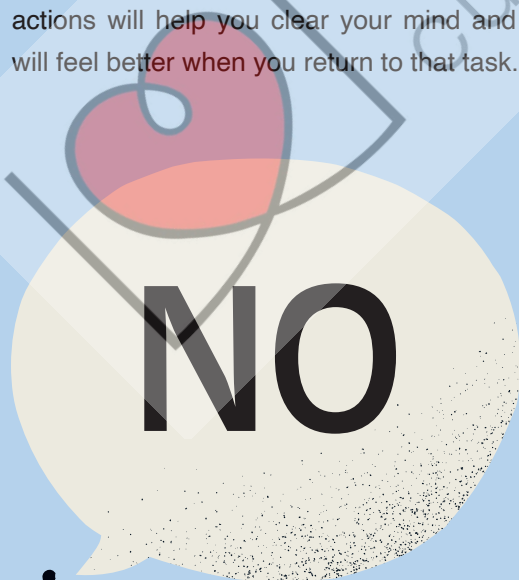
Coping with overwhelming feelings does not come easy for many of us. Here are five ways to help you manage your intense feelings.

1. Accept Your Feelings

The first step to any change is to accept what you feel. It is okay to feel overwhelmed; it is okay to feel flustered; and it is okay to feel as if the world is going to end. It is only a natural human response to stress, and those feelings do not define you. There is nothing wrong with you feeling this way. Many of us do too, at various points in our lives.

2. Step Away

If it is all too overwhelming, just step away – take a break from that task. For example, if you have been studying very hard for your science test but suddenly feel your heart is racing and you don't seem to remember anything, just stop what you are doing. Go to the kitchen and have a snack. Go outside and feel the breeze. Such actions will help you clear your mind and you will feel better when you return to that task.



3. Make a List

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed when you have too many things to do. Perhaps there are too many topics to study, or you may have a long to-do list when organising a birthday event. The best thing to do is to sit down and make a list of the things that need to get done. Writing this down is a good idea as it would help you to visualise the different tasks. Then, rank the tasks in order of priority, depending on the importance or urgency. This gives you some structure to work with, and you will feel calmer at the end of writing the list – you would have got a grip on the task and yourself!

4. Learn to Say ‘No’

Where you can help it, say ‘no’ – learn to set boundaries for yourself. For example, if your friend asks you to go shopping with her to buy a gift for her mother but you know you have to study for an important test, say ‘no’ to her. You wouldn't want to stress yourself out when you end up not having enough time to study for the test. So, prioritise yourself, and excuse yourself.

5. Breathe Deeply

It is no secret that breathing helps calm us down, especially deep breathing. Whenever you feel overwhelmed, do this: inhale slowly through your nose, hold for a few seconds, then exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat this three to five times. You are bound to feel more at ease at the end of it.

Learning to manage intense emotions takes time and practice. Always be in touch with yourself, and learn what works best for you. You only have one YOU.



A Mountain Retreat

By Ming Wong

When I first ¹broached the idea of a quiet break for myself, my friends and family were not very encouraging: “It’s one of those silent retreats, isn’t it? Is it **your thing**? You like people, and you like to talk. It’s a long way to go and do nothing. You could do nothing at home.”

Indeed, the energetic on-the-go person that I was (and still am!) had wanted to do something. A picture of an ²abbey island nestling on a glacier lake amidst the mountains of Bavaria, Germany looked extremely inviting. They offered short-term courses: yoga, meditation, qigong and

vegan cooking. I rang the abbey and found out that all the courses were already fully booked.

“Why do you want to come to us?” asked the gentle voice on the phone.

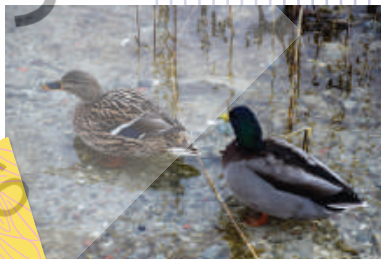
“I don’t know. I just need a few days to myself, I guess. I had been in an accident and broken my leg badly. Although I am once again fit enough to walk, I feel somewhat stressed.”

“Then come,” said the voice again. “We have a room for you.”

“You’re sure? You know what, I’ll bring my books. You wouldn’t have to worry about entertaining me.”

“No, don’t bring anything. Just come and be.”

Hauptsteg Frauen - Insel



Based on that brief, enigmatic exchange, I got on a train from Frankfurt to Munich. There, I transited to a local train for a small town called Prien. At the bus stop outside the station, I boarded the bus signposted for Fraueninsel which literally means Women's Island. The driver asked if I had been there before. When I said 'No', he gestured me to sit right in front. It was a short ride with stops for old people and school children. Then the bus ³crested a hill and suddenly a large lake spread before me - Chiemsee. The driver had known the impact of that first glimpse of glimmering glacial blue. We stopped very near to the jetty where a boat awaited.

Fraueninsel is a popular summer holiday destination. Families book entire cottages or hotels and go swimming and boating. There are playgrounds, lakeside cafes and restaurants, and quite a number of craft businesses such as pottery and wood-carving workshops. You can also see why it has a few artist studios – the expanse of sky and water makes for stunning scenery.

But I had arrived off season in winter. The mountains were snow-covered, and many shops and hotels were closed. I picked up my bag and walked the few steps to the Frauenwörth Abbey. Founded in the year 722, it is Germany's oldest

⁴Benedictine abbey. It has a beautiful church, a clock tower and white stonewall buildings enclosing a pretty courtyard garden. A kindly nun in a ⁵wimple showed me to my room. "There's very little routine except for the three meals. You have them in the small dining room with the other guests. These are our church service times but you don't have to attend unless you wish to." I stole a glance at the schedule – I was not going to be up for the six o' clock dawn prayers!

My room was sparse but clean. There was a Bible and a couple of hardbacks in German. Entirely devoid of modern gadgets and hotel amenities, it nevertheless felt restful and welcoming. I soon found that people enrolled in courses stayed in another building. There were just four 'independent' travellers: an elderly lady, a housewife in her 30s, a rather dashing-looking young man and me. We greeted each other briefly. Being the newbie, I was more inclined to chat. But I noticed that everybody gave short, essential answers.

Fraueninsel is a small island, about 12 hectares – you can easily walk around it in 30 min-

utes. In fact, you have to walk because the island is car and bicycle-free. About 250 inhabitants live in about 50 houses. Most people work on the mainland, but many work for the abbey, manning the shop or café or servicing the conference centre. The abbey shop sells jams, marzipan, gingerbread and local wine.

My days fell into quiet routine – lots of walks interspersed with simple but delicious meals. I noticed the beauty of the houses and gardens, albeit wilting in winter, and the little jetties for boats. Fishing must be a major local activity. I spent time in the church cemetery reading the gravestones.

The Frauenwirth Abbey, being 1200 years old, has lovely art and history. It used to be a major stop for pilgrims who came to honour Irmgard, the first abbess of the abbey and the patron saint for safety in childbirths. Some quarters were off limits, but generally the nuns did not mind us wandering around long corridors looking at ancient portraits. I went to a few services because I loved the singing of the nuns. Having a good voice must be one of the requirements for dedicating your life to church.

But mostly I sat around a lot on benches watching snow-capped mountains and the breeze or boats floating on the lake surface. Ducks waddled around my feet, obviously used to calm and peaceful visitors. Slowly, I let go of the need to check my phone, talk to someone, or think about work or my life back in the city. The nuns were right – you really can just sit and be.

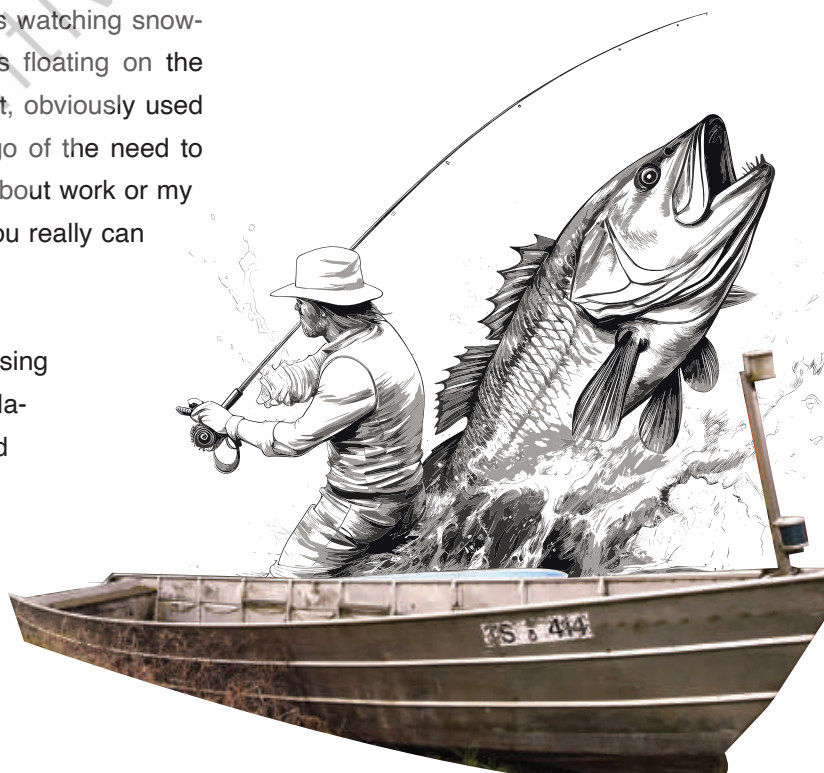
Months later, I spotted a poster advertising Romeo and Juliet performed by the Dutch National Ballet from Amsterdam. Romeo looked familiar – it was the young man on my retreat. Contemplation can be an important preparation for a performance, I thought.

By the way, did you know that ducks make a clicking sound when they walk?



WORD BANK

1. **broached:**
introduced, brought into mention
2. **abbey:**
a building or community of nuns or monks headed by an abbot or abbess
3. **crested:**
reached the top or high point
4. **Benedictine:**
a religious order or community founded by or following the rule of St Benedict
5. **wimple:**
a piece of fabric draped around the head to frame the face of a nun



Write about how you stayed resilient as you overcame a challenge.



Cheong Vicky,
Class 4 Love (2023),
Kuo Chuan Presbyterian
Secondary School

Editor's Comments

Comments:

The writer has a clear and engaging writing style, which makes it easy to visualise and follow the narrative. She has also deftly targeted the “how” in the question. This story is simple yet attentive to the demands of the topic and linguistically proficient.

Content:

Although the plot of this narrative is not groundbreaking, it is very well executed, and is proof that a good writer can make any story a good read. Even though Lynn's personality was never explicitly described, it is easy for the reader to empathise with her and relate to her struggles. The fifth and sixth paragraphs are an example of great characterisation without derailing the story. Through this, the reader is also made to root for Lynn given her resilience and desire to improve.

Language:

The writer's personal voice
This narrative starts off with a conversation that instantly thrusts the reader into the conflict that Lynn faces. It is effectively carried out and the conversation is dynamic, thanks to the descriptions of the speakers which give the reader a vivid mental image of the scene. The writer also uses a mix of sentence lengths, which sustains the reader's attention. There is also good use of “show, not tell”, especially when vividly describing Lynn's emotions. The use of effective **metaphors** helps to sustain the reader's interest in the relatively simple plot.

Student's Essay

“Lynn! Come here for a moment, I want to speak with you,” Ms Tan beckoned for me to go over to her desk.

I was confused— was I in trouble? I had no recollection of breaking any school rules. Meekly, I asked, “What's the matter, Ms Tan?”

Ms Tan grinned at me, **pearly whites on full display**. “You took part in an international art competition last month, didn't you? Well, since you received the top prize in the youth category, the principal has invited you to give a speech next Thursday, to share your experience! Isn't this just sublime?” **Her eyes twinkled**, eagerly awaiting my response.

Instead of an enthusiastic “Yes!” **I could only stare blankly at Ms Tan**. A speech... in front of the whole school... alone. Oh no, this was not sublime— in fact, it was **my living nightmare**.

Ever the artsy soul, I took pride in expressing my emotions through art. Be it crayons on walls, paint on paper or digital posters, my pursuit of art was **constantly** evolving, my thirst to create, insatiable. I slaved away at my artworks, **conveying multitudes** in each stroke and each splash of colour.

Public **speaking**, however, was not my forte. Instead, it was my Achilles' heel. I had never been a master of using speech to express myself and **I could not stomach the thought** of being on the stage in full view of everyone, subject to judgements. It was excruciating.

“I don't suppose I can refuse, huh?” **My voice was shaky, hiding my fear behind a weak smile**.

“Of course not! This is an amazing opportunity and you must be sure to grab it, Lynn!” Ms Tan responded.

Dejected, I returned to my seat. What was I going to do? There was less than a week to prepare, and not to mention the insurmountable task of overcoming my fear of public speaking.

I gritted my teeth, steadying my resolve. I was determined not to make a fool of myself on stage, and to do so I needed to have a game plan. It was going to be tough, of course, for I had no experience in this field. This was foreign territory.

So, the next few days, I consulted my English teacher, as well as my friends from the Debate Club. I went through a thorough list of pointers when speaking and practised speaking aloud – first, to myself in the mirror. Then, I slowly tried reciting my speech in front of my family. This was no easy feat – even with family I was petrified. The thought of forgetting my lines and being embarrassed ate at me.

However, I regained my determination to do well, giving myself pep talks to get back on track. Slowly but surely, my stutters and stumbles had reduced, with only the occasional mishap here and there.

In the blink of an eye, the dreaded day had arrived. From behind the curtains of the stage, I fidgeted, picking at my skin in nervousness.

“Now, let’s invite Lynn Koh to share her experience of participating in an international art competition!”

I walked unsteadily towards the microphone, my legs jelly-like.

Three steps to the microphone.

Two steps.

One.

Dead silence. There was nothing but dead silence, and the accompaniment of my heartbeat thrumming in my ears, beads of sweat cascading down my forehead. Suffice to say, I was terrified.

I locked eyes with my friend in the front row - the sight of a familiar face was comforting. I took a deep breath, and began.

“...Thank you for your kind attention.”

Finally, it was over. It was certainly a terrifying experience but I was proud that I had not fumbled my speech at all! I had successfully overcome my stage fright. The sense of accomplishment washed over me like a wave, and I could not hold back a smile. It was as if I had undergone a metamorphosis, transforming from a mere caterpillar to a brilliant butterfly.

'Education is a great leveller for social inequality.'

What are your views?

Student's Essay

'Education is like a ladder that can help individuals climb out of social disparity. While its primary purpose is to teach us the elementary subjects, it also plays an essential role in levelling out the playing field for the less fortunate. ^{C1}This, I believe, has been well served by education.

First and foremost, education promotes social cohesion and diversity. Several educational institutes have incorporated into their education system fewer banding of students based on their overall academic capabilities. ^{C2}Specifically, Singapore's Ministry of Education is in the midst of implementing Full Subject Based Banding (FSBB) where students of varying academic abilities are banded into the same class. More often than not, educational disparity occurs when there is a division of classes based on students' academic abilities. With such a system, students are less likely to divide themselves based on the academic rigor of the streams they are assigned to. Since students are able to find common ground between different streams, this fosters mutual understanding and empathy amongst them as they learn to mingle and interact with their peers during and outside curriculum time. Certainly, education has helped to level out the playing field for those who may not be as academically strong as others, since it gives them the opportunity to learn and improve themselves in an inclusive environment without being discouraged by the class divide or negative labels by their peers.

Furthermore, with the constant changes and tweaks to the education system to fit into the demands of knowledge in this 21st Century world, students are better equipped with the necessary understanding and skills needed to access better opportunities and resources today. Beyond solely being proficient

By Charis Lim, 4R7 (2023)
Broadrick Secondary School

Editor's Comments

+: The writer uses metaphors and has good mastery of the language. The sentences vary in length, and the arguments are sound and articulated clearly. The use of signposts and connectors makes the essay flow easily.

-: The drawback of this essay is the narrow scope. Since the question did not specify "in your society", the examples need not only be from Singapore. It would be better to incorporate other examples from a broader perspective! Ideally, an extra paragraph on how education allows for more opportunities for the marginalised would fit well and bolster your argument and show greater understanding of the topic.

at elementary subjects like Mathematics and Science, our education system also requires students to have a strong grasp of current affairs. Subjects like Social studies and Geography require students to delve deeper into current affairs related to social inequalities such as homelessness. This has certainly deepened their understanding of the diverse backgrounds of people from all over the world, inculcating essential qualities such as sensitivity, awareness and empathy. Such values enable students to exercise well-considered and non-biased judgement and logical reasoning while taking on different perspectives of the government, citizens and of those affected by the disparity. In turn, this creates a society where people are more sociocentric and learn to care for people who may be outside their immediate circle, bridging the gaps between the haves and haves-nots in society.

Nonetheless, some may argue that education itself is also a contributor of social inequality. With the ranking of schools, division of students based on genders, it breeds and reflects phenomena of social inequality - educational elitism, credentialism and sexism are just few of the many instances. Unfortunately, in these cases, instead of levelling social inequality, education may be doing the opposite. However, I acknowledge the efforts of ^{C3}the government who has stepped up to mitigate such instances, by implementing meritocracy and measures to help solve the issue. Instead of gaining advantage based on their social statuses, students are awarded by their academic accomplishments. This demonstrates to students that their backgrounds do not determine their paths in life and spurs them to work harder to achieve academic excellence.

What would our world look like if education was not accessible to everyone? Perhaps we would see more social injustice, more poverty, more ignorance, and more violence. All in all, social inequality is a dominant social issue in practically all developed and developing countries. As explored earlier, although education is not a perfect solution, it is a vital one. Of course, it is not the only way to minimise this phenomenon. This urgent matter requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders - the government should implement more policies and initiatives to support the marginalised while schools do their part with education. Most importantly, individuals must cultivate empathy and understanding by always being ready to lend a helping hand to others. Only then, will we realise an inclusive and harmonious society.

Content:

C1: A thesis statement that briefly states the writer's position would be effective here.

C2: While this example is relevant, since it has not been contextualised yet, there is less credibility that this system will effectively promote social cohesion. This paragraph focuses too much also on interaction between peers of different academic abilities. Instead, try looking at the bigger picture and compare larger social groups.

C3: From context, I know you are referring to the Singaporean government, but another reader might not.

Modified Student Essay

Education is like a ladder that can help individuals climb out of social disparity. While its primary purpose is to teach us the elementary subjects, it also plays an essential role in levelling out the playing field for the less fortunate. **Education provides more opportunities for all, especially the marginalised, encourages social interaction across all social groups, and inculcates values of acceptance and care for our fellow man. Hence, I believe that education is an effective equaliser.**

First and foremost, **education empowers people to live better lives. It enables upward socioeconomic mobility, which is crucial for one to escape the poverty cycle. Through education, people acquire skills and knowledge that allow them to improve themselves and their surroundings. It gives people agency over their lives as they are armed with the information needed to understand the world and tackle situations. Access to education hence allows many to find employment and create economic opportunities for themselves. It is for these reasons that quality education was named one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations. In fact, education was identified as the key that will allow many other SDGs to be achieved. An example of a successful education system is China, whose major investments in its education system since the 1950s has brought the country great economic prosperity. With a higher education rate, it became the fastest growing economy in the world since the 1980s and is transitioning from a developing country to a developed one. Hence, it is clear that education plays a vital role in improving the lives of the impoverished.**

Secondly, education promotes social cohesion and diversity. Especially in compulsory public schooling systems, many students from different walks of life are made to interact with one another on the same level. This is even more pertinent in multi-ethnic societies, as citizens must learn to interact respectfully among different social groups. To tackle this issue, curricula in Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, for example, incorporated notions of peace and respect for diversity, having had violent conflicts in their history. Since students are taught to find common ground between different citizenships and identities, this fosters mutual understanding and empathy amongst them as they learn to mingle and interact with their peers during and outside curriculum time. Certainly, education has helped to level out the playing field by eradicating prejudiced opinions from students through increased interaction among parties, thereby giving members from less privileged groups the opportunity to learn and improve themselves in an inclusive environment without being discouraged by the divide or negative labels by their peers.

Furthermore, with the constant changes and tweaks to the education system to **meet** the demands of knowledge in **this modern world**, students are better equipped with the necessary understanding and skills needed to access better opportunities and resources today. Beyond solely being proficient in elementary subjects **such as** Mathematics and Science, **many** education systems **around the world** also require students to have a strong grasp of current affairs. **Humanities subjects such as** Social Studies and Geography require students to delve deeper into current affairs related to social inequalities such as homelessness. This has certainly deepened their understanding of the diverse backgrounds of people from all over the world, inculcating essential qualities such as sensitivity, awareness and empathy. Such values enable students to exercise well-considered and non-biased judgement and logical reasoning while taking on different perspectives **such as those of the** government, citizens and of those affected by the disparity. In turn, this creates a society where people are more sociocentric and learn to care for people who may be outside their immediate circle, bridging the gap between the haves and haves-nots in society.

Nonetheless, some may argue that education itself is also a contributor to social inequality. The ranking of schools and division of students based on gender reflects the phenomena of social inequality. Unfortunately, in these cases, instead of **reducing** social inequality, education may be doing the opposite. However, **I believe that governments should** step up to mitigate such instances, **such as** by implementing meritocracy and measures to help solve the issue. **This is the approach adopted by the Singapore government.** Instead of gaining advantage based on their social status, students are **rewarded for** their academic accomplishments. This demonstrates to students that their backgrounds do not determine their paths in life and spurs them to work harder to achieve academic excellence.

What would our world look like if education was not accessible to everyone? Perhaps we would see more social injustice, more poverty, more ignorance, and more violence. All in all, social inequality is a dominant social issue in practically all developed and developing countries. As explored earlier, although education is not a perfect solution, it is a vital one **as it empowers people, allows interaction across social groups, and teaches interpersonal skills.** Of course, it is not the only way to minimise this phenomenon. This urgent matter requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders – the government should implement more policies and initiatives to support the marginalised ones while schools do their part through education. Most importantly, individuals must cultivate empathy and understanding by always being ready to lend a helping hand to others. Only then will we realise an inclusive and harmonious society.



I. HEY LISTEN

Part 4: Paraphrasing

Part 4 of the listening comprehension examination requires you to listen carefully and identify specific pieces of information or details. Here are some tips to help you listen for details and pick out the correct answers.

Paraphrasing

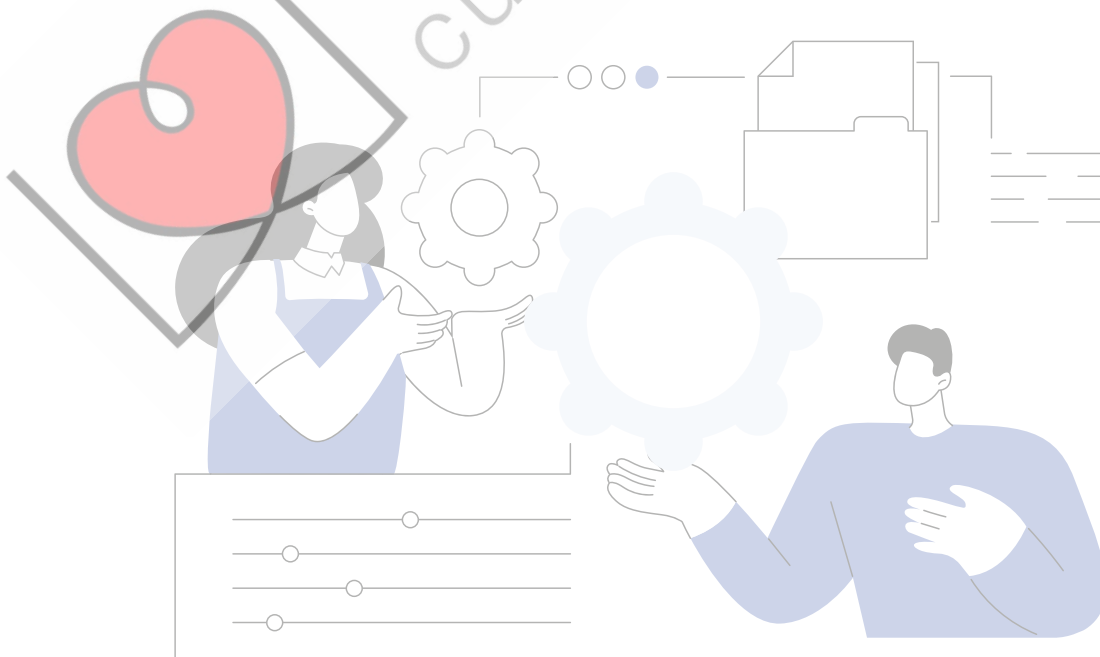
Before you listen to the recording, always read the helping words provided in the graphic organiser. Pay careful attention to the different sections, as indicated by the headers. You must also be aware that the helping words are often paraphrased. This means that what you hear in the recording may not necessarily be presented using the same words in the graphic organiser. As such, it is critical for you to analyse the information provided prior to listening so that you can focus on identifying relevant details as you listen. The following are some ways in which the information can be paraphrased:

- Change of sentence structure

In this method, sentence structures and phrasing of ideas are carefully altered while still retaining the original meanings. This can be carried out by changing the active voice to the passive voice and vice versa, or reordering phrases. Multiple short sentences can also be combined to form long ones or different ideas in long sentences can be presented in short sentences. Do not get distracted by the paraphrasing. Instead, focus on identifying the relevant details as you listen.

- Use of synonyms

The choice of words is important in presenting ideas in a coherent and cohesive manner, and in this regard, the use of synonyms may enhance the quality of the writing and make it more interesting. Again, do not lose sight of the focus of each section in the graphic organiser and listen intently to determine the relevant details, even as the surrounding words are paraphrased.



**Listening Comprehension Activity** [8 marks]**Part 4**

You will hear an environmental activist talking to a group of students about Bali's plastic pollution. As you listen, complete the notes. You do not need to write in full sentences.

You will hear the recording **only once**.

**Bali's Blighted Beaches****Background**

- Popular for **(i)** _____ and _____ [1]
earning it the title of **(ii)** _____ [1]

Current Situation

- Visitors throw **(iii)** _____, which may potentially end up [1]
being eaten by **(iv)** _____ or washed ashore by _____. [1]
- Issues are compounded by **(v)** _____ and _____ [1]
_____, leaving a significant proportion of the plastic waste untreated. [1]

Consequences

- Plastics get **(vi)** _____ or _____. [1]
- Locals are affected when there are fewer visitors due to **(vii)** _____.
- Canals and rivers are also _____, resulting in _____. [1]

Efforts to address the issue

- Community endeavours such as **(viii)** _____ and _____ [1]
educate people on ways to use plastics wisely.
- Biodegradable packaging and reusable containers provide eco-friendly options that aid in the fight against plastic pollution.

II. SPEAK UP

Answering the Spoken Interaction Question: How to Support Opinion

The Spoken Interaction component comprises two prompts, both related in theme to the video stimulus and prompt in the Planned Response component of the Oral Examination. It is important to note this so that you can brainstorm possible ideas for the Spoken Interaction component during the time given for preparation.

The two prompts in the Spoken Interaction component typically require you to express your opinions. Consider the following ways of supporting the opinions you present:

- If you are able to recall statistics that are current and relevant, do include them. This lends credibility to your response.
- Apart from using statistics, which may not be readily available during an examination, you may consider including personal experiences and anecdotes to illustrate your opinions, making your response engaging and real. Remember to make explicit links between your personal experiences and the opinions you are expressing to help the examiner focus on the relevance of the experiences.
- Also consider including general examples that can be observed in society or the environment around you. This would depend very much on the theme you are tasked to respond to.

Regardless of the method you choose, remember not to overgeneralise or make sweeping statements. These will reduce the credibility of your opinions.

Task

Refer to page 44 and answer the questions under the Planned Response and Spoken Interaction sections.

III. READING COMPREHENSION

A. READING COMPREHENSION: VISUAL TEXT [5 marks]

Study the online advertisement (Text 1) and the extract from a blog post (Text 2) on page 25, and answer Questions 1-4.

1. Look at Text 1. Tick (✓) the most effective title for the image in this advertisement.

- Mealtimes – a no-phone zone
- Digital Devices @ Meals
- Say 'No' to digital devices

[1]

2. The advertisement states 'Phone-Free Food – reclaim the meal table back from your phones!' What does the word 'reclaim' suggest?

[1]

3. Identify the phrase in Text 2 which reflects the aim in Text 1 of 'eating without your phones'.

[1]



4. Look at Texts 1 and 2 and statements (a) and (b) below.

Tick (✓) the correct answer for each statement.

(a) One purpose of both texts is ...

- to solve a pressing problem.
- to encourage a change in behaviour.
- to educate the public.

[1]

(b) The tone for Text 2 is ...

- friendly and informal.
- informal and persuasive.
- firm and admonishing.

[1]

B. READING COMPREHENSION: FICTION TEXT

The Global Question

The Global Question (or the Flowchart Question) is the last question in the Fiction Text section of the English Language Paper 2 examination. This question typically requires you to focus on either the writer's emotions or the different stages in the text. You are provided with helping words, some of which you do not need to use. These are distractors and in your selection of answers, you must look for cues and clues in the relevant paragraphs to help you determine the most accurate or suitable answer.

Consider an example in which the paragraph speaks of the writer's return to her childhood home after being away for a long period of time. If you were tasked to select an appropriate emotion to describe this situation, you should be alert to the following:

- **Details**
Details such as her reactions upon reaching the house, the words she uttered and/or her behaviour as she entered the house will need to be noted. These would provide you with clues and cues on her emotional state at that point in the text.
- **The intensity of the emotion**
Assuming that she showed intense happiness at being back after a long time, you should consider words such as 'euphoria' or 'exhilaration', and look for these actual words or words that match these emotions in intensity in the list of helping words. Simply describing the emotion using the word 'happiness' is not entirely accurate as the intensity of the emotion is not reflected.

If you are analysing the main stages in the text, focus on the actions taking place in each paragraph. These would provide you with the clues and cues on the structure and flow of the text.

Assuming the paragraph contains details on the character's move to her new home, an appropriate phrase to describe that stage would be 'the move'. There may be distractors such as 'the change' or 'the inevitable departure', and you must identify sufficient details, such as a timeline of the events taking place and the people helping the character in her move, to support your answer. These details would help you eliminate the distractors.

Reading Comprehension Task: Fiction Text [20 marks]

Refer to the article 'The Forest's Last Breath', on pages 30-34, and answer the questions below.

1. What does the phrase 'hanging on to every word' (line 7) suggest about Kara's relationship with her grandfather?
[Inferential]

_____ [1]

2. In Paragraph 3, the writer says that she witnessed the 'interdependence' (line 28) between the villagers and the enchanted wilderness. Explain what this interdependence was. Give **three** pieces of evidence from Paragraph 3 to support your answer.
[Literal-Evidence]

_____ [3]

3. In Paragraph 4, the writer uses the simile 'like a predatory beast stalking its prey' (lines 46-47). What does this simile suggest about the relationship between machine and nature?
[Inferential]

_____ [1]

4. In Paragraph 5, the writer talks about the first time she saw the logging site.

(a) 'Machines, colossal and relentless, were tearing through the forest, their jaws biting into ancient trees.' (lines 50-52) How do you think the writer felt here?

_____ [1]

(b) Explain how the language used in this paragraph highlights the extent of the destruction caused by the machines. Support your answer with **two** details from Paragraph 5.
[Language Use]

_____ [2]

5. (a) In Paragraph 5, the writer says that the Kapok tree was 'standing still and mighty' (line 56). What does this suggest about the appearance of the tree?
[Inferential]

_____ [1]

(b) Which other phrase in Paragraph 5 supports this idea?
[Vocabulary]

_____ [1]



6. In Paragraph 6, why do you think the people in the area had 'horrified looks' (lines 70-71)?

[Inferential]

_____ [1]

7. In Paragraph 8, the writer felt that their 'voices had finally been heard' (lines 103-104). What made the writer think so?

[Literal]

_____ [1]

8. In Paragraph 9, the writer says that the villagers 'had won the battle' (lines 113-114) but 'were losing the war' (line 115). To what was the writer referring in each of the following:

[Literal]

(a) the battle,

(b) the war?

_____ [2]

9. In Paragraph 9, the writer says 'the forest wept with the anguished cries of the birds and animals' (lines 116-117) as an outcome of the deforestation.

[Language Use]

(a) What does 'the forest wept' refer to?

_____ [1]

(b) What is the effect on the reader of the personification 'the forest wept'?

_____ [1]

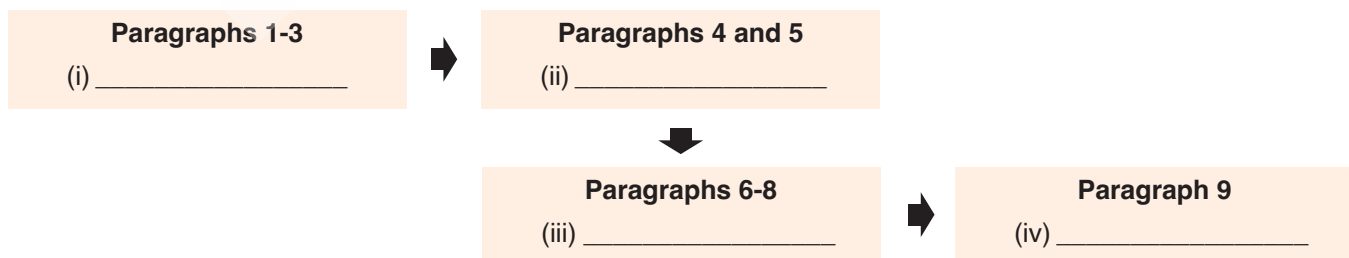
10. The structure of the text reflects the stages in the writer's experience of watching the forest in her village undergo deforestation. Complete the flow chart by choosing one phrase from the box to summarise the events in each stage. There are some extra words in the box you do not need to use.

[4]

Stages in the writer's experience

the sadness the waiting game the quest	the rage the change the accusation	the uncertainty the defeat the attack
--	--	---

Flow chart



IV. LANGUAGE EDITING

Carefully read the following excerpt on overfishing, consisting of 12 lines. The first and last lines are correct. For eight of the lines, there is one grammatical error in each line. There are two more lines with no errors.

If there is NO error in a line, put a tick in the space provided.

If the line is incorrect, circle the incorrect word and write the correct word in the space provided.

The correct word you provide must not change the original meaning of the sentence.

Example:

I arrived to my destination at 2pm.

_____ at

My mother always wears sensible clothes.

_____ ✓

On average, we each eat more than 20 kilograms of fish per year.

Worldwide, between 1961 and 2016, fish consumption increases faster than meat consumption, and grew twice as fast than the human population.

All of these fishy dinners have depleted marine fish stocks at a point where a third of global fish stocks are now classed as 'overfished', meant that if we continue fishing at the same levels, these populations will decline.

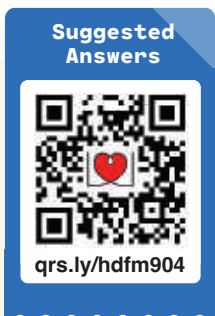
Most of the rest is being exploited at the maximum levels that can be sustained without long-term declining. Fishing also has a negative impact on

non-food species in the ecosystem, and pollutes the waters for fishing waste. Temporary fishing bans may help to alleviate some of the worst

effects, but what would happen where we ban fishing altogether? Millions would struggle to eat and earn enough.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____
- 7 _____
- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 10 _____

(modified from BBC Science Focus)



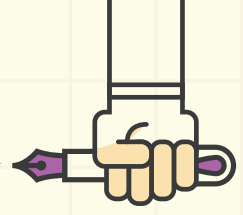
Scan QR code to access our suggested answers



6TH

Writer's MAKEOVER WORKSHOP

+ Creative Expression



4 JUNE 2024

Tuesday, 10am - 4pm

Session 1: 10am - 12pm

Session 2: 2pm - 4pm

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
(Campus 1) Wing B, Level 2 Seminar Room (02-08)
80 Bencoolen Street Singapore 189655



Dear Upper Secondary Students,

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Join us for an enriching and creative workshop that combines the worlds of essay writing and art & design. This unique event aims to foster your skills in written expression and visual creativity, offering you a rare opportunity to explore the synergy between these two forms of self-expression.

Don't miss this opportunity to nurture your talent and bring your imagination to life. Sign up now!

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Terms & Conditions Apply

PLEASE RSVP BY
19 MAY 2024

to reserve a place as slots are limited.
Slots are on a first-come, first-served basis.



FREE ADMISSION + GOODIE BAG
(WORTH \$50)

*Please note that the goodie bags will only be given at the end of the workshop

10AM - 12PM

with Miss

NADIA SHAH



With close to a decade's worth of teaching experience, Miss Nadia has amassed a wealth of know-how for students to perform to the best of their abilities. Her varied background spans from journalism to public relations, and because writing has been a central thread through her career, she is also in a unique position to educate students on real-world applications.

2PM - 4PM

with Mr

JAMES SIN



Mr James Sin is a Trainer and an Educator for 27 years. He is currently an Educator in Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts with practice-led research interests that include educational experimentation in engaging and impacting the Generation-Y & Generation-Z, socio-emotional learning, digital space, psychology of space, social media communication, body language, talk language and write language.

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