



# Raffles Institution

## 2014 Post-Prelim Guided Essay Approach

Adapted and edited from Kristabel Low- 10S06L

“Technology provides assurance in a world of fraught with uncertainty and insecurity.” Do you agree?

As founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates once said “Never before in history has innovation offered promise of so much to so many.” The advent of technology has befallen mankind and it dwells in every aspect of life. In a world faced with a multitude of challenges- technology can be construed as a saving grace. When utilised with wisdom and caution, technology morphs into a mechanism which serves to provide assurance to humanity rather than the grim alternative. While one may argue that assurance afforded by technology is not absolute, any advantage is preferred to none at all and by and large, the sense of certainty it nurtures heavily outweighs any uncertainty and insecurity it might breed.

Some conservative factions argue that technology may provoke uncertainty and insecurity. The vast amount of information that technology generates, and provides access to may be overwhelming, poorly-grounded or unverifiable. At best this might cause confusion; at worst the multitude of information can be paralyzing leading to unsound decisions. An example of this manifests as “Cyberchondria” which is the unfounded escalation of concerns about common symptoms based on review of online literature. It is a trend amongst internet users to anonymously ask “Dr. Google” for answers pertaining to one’s health before latching on to the worst possible diagnosis. Instead of the assurance of quick access, to information, individuals are more likely to become anxious at the partial knowledge they have access to, leading to increased insecurity and anxiety. While such online information has been lauded for its immediacy and transparency, it simultaneously has been denounced for its lack of ethics, quality and frequently sensationalist treatments which have led to landmark legal law suits.

However, this argument is untenable as it over simplifies the role which society plays in tandem with technology to provide assurance in a world stricken with uncertainty. Technology has facilitated the exponential growth of online formal and informal journalism sites. The creation of new technologies including blog sites, social networks, and the use of smart phones with cameras, allows individuals to publish their own point of view with regard to an array of issues. Contributors to such sites may include individuals without any journalistic training yet the information they provide is may be undeniably crucial in substantiating and legitimising mainstream media reports. For example, many stories

**Comment [B1]:** A pertinent quote can help provide an insight to your thesis. It also showcases your vast knowledge on the subject matter.

**Comment [B2]:** Introduction of your essay’s thesis statement

**Comment [B3]:** It is equally important to mention the limitation of your thesis (anti-thesis)

**Comment [B4]:** By re-using the key words in the question, I am making a direct reference to the anti-thesis.

**Comment [B5]:** Rather than falling into the trap of generalising people, state specific characteristics which best describe them. (Conservatives, liberals etc.)

**Comment [B6]:** Within a few sentences you should elucidate the key point as to WHY technology does not provide assurance in a world of fraught with uncertainty and insecurity. This must be clearly explained so the examiner can comprehend your point. The point I try to raise is the lack of clarity arising from the heaps of information available.

**Comment [B7]:** Pick an example which is relevant to the point you are raising. The relevance of your examples will affect the grade of your script.

**Comment [B8]:** Explain the rationale of your choice in your example and how it re-supports your point (in this case; how the quick access to the vast amount of info causes one to lack assurance)

**Comment [B9]:** There should be an immediate rebuttal against the thesis. State the problem with your anti-thesis (it could be an over-generalisation or simplification of the broader issue at hand)

**Comment [B10]:** Within a few sentences you should elucidate the key point as to WHY technology does provide assurance.

regarding the Arab Spring were covered by citizen journalists when mainstream media were unable to reach areas of conflict due to media blackout in various regions. Further, many smaller media publications depend on the incoming stream of online information by citizen journalists for the latest updates, due to their low staff count. Undoubtedly, an individual's capability to benefit from the proliferation of information in the media derives from their ability to discern the obvious truth from falsity. However, the cyber culture, is one whereby people through a comparison of numerous sources, can verify and establish an overarching sense of certainty with regards to most queries.

Technology has cultivated an environment of certainty through its ability to ensure the provision of food. Despite the threat of food scarcity and adverse climatic conditions, agricultural productivity has arguably stabilised- some may even argue boomed- to a large degree under the utilisation of various technological inputs. It is widely accepted that technology has revolutionised the agricultural scene. More farm equipment today is being outfitted with smart sensors that can accurately gauge the requirements of a plant. For example, soil and crop sensors measure almost all traits of plant health from water needs to nitrogen levels in the soil. The newest area of sensor use is in irrigation where the sensors measure water needs and thus optimise water use decreasing yield loss. In fact the social stigma once engulfing agricultural cultivation as an economically unviable sector- due to the unpredictability in crop yield -is surely but steadily being debunked by technology itself. The increasing economic viability of such technology permits globally, stability in food products as the veil uncertainty in the agricultural scene has been dispelled by the precision of machinery.

Technology has provided immense assurance to society through its development of complex and reliable security infrastructure. Technology has been deployed in the fields of national security and defence. The Singapore Army is currently undergoing a transformation into a 3rd Generation fighting force. This essentially means the improvement of the army through leveraging on technology and weapon systems. As of 2013, the Singapore military was apportioned a whopping 12.3 Billion Singapore dollars out of its annual budget. Heavy investments in recent years, such as the signing of contracts by the Singaporean Military to purchase: F-15 fighter jets from Boeing, 110 Leopard-2 battle tanks from Germany, and six missile frigates from France pay testament to the army's unwavering goal of keeping up with worldwide technological advances whilst maintaining national security. Technology has also been specifically deployed in the field of counter-terrorism. After the infamous "9-11" terrorist attacks in America, many countries have heightened their airport security through numerous technological advances aimed at apprehending individuals who try to smuggle unauthorised items on board aircrafts. Till today, measures are constantly being altered and upgraded to improve the efficiency of airport security. According to President Obama, in 2014 there will be the deployment of body-imaging scanners in American airports. These measures will undoubtedly provide assurance for passengers as they need not be so overtly worried about the threat of terrorism. Through the aforementioned argument, it is clear that technology does not only provide safety to people but also safeguards a country's sovereignty.

**Comment [B11]:** Since this is a rebuttal-it isn't without its own fault. Its is important to raise this fault as well.

**Comment [B12]:** However, to prevent any form of self-contradiction, you have to ultimately raise a rebuttal for the aforementioned rebuttal so as to reinforce your thesis instead of your anti-thesis. (In this case technology provides assurance in a world stricken with uncertainty)

**Comment [B13]:** New point, supporting the thesis. In this case we refer to technology's role in provision of food.

**Comment [B14]:** This statement reveals why the world is fraught with uncertainty and insecurity. Note: this is not an implied point, you have to quantify why the world is fraught with uncertainty and to what extent.

**Comment [B15]:** By discussing a social stigma we invariably tackle the root of the question; the world is fraught with uncertainty and insecurity.

**Comment [B16]:** Provision of food and linking it up to the economic argument further reinforces why tech provides assurance.

**Comment [B17]:** New point, supporting the thesis. In this case we refer to technology's role in defence.

**Comment [B18]:** Remember to link your example to your raised point.

**Comment [B19]:** Remember to link your example to your raised point.



Technology has also provided great assurance within the fields of healthcare. Technology has deepened our understanding of the human body and consequently aided in the process of treatment for diseases and ailments. With an abundance of information on the human body in tandem with advanced medical technology, humans can make more informed decisions with regards to their healthcare. Precision medicine is a fairly new multi-faceted approach to medicine that integrates molecular and clinical research with patient data and outcomes and places the patient at the centre of all elements. Genomic, epigenetic, and environmental data are studied together with patient information behaviour to understand individual disease patterns and to design preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic solutions. This process has increased the capability of delivering accurate diagnosis and the more apt administration of drugs to suitably tackle most medical conditions. With an increased accuracy in diagnosis, individuals are less inclined to turn a blind eye from seeking medical attention, even if it means having to incur medical expenses, as it would in many instances enhance the possibility of recovery substantially.

**Comment [B20]:** New point, supporting the thesis. In this case we refer to technology's role in healthcare.

All in all, the notion that technology does not provide assurance in this world fraught with insecurity and uncertainty is a myopic view at the very best. Technology has a mammoth role to play in ameliorating many of the world's problems today encompassing the fields of media, food, defence and healthcare, all of which are pillars essential for growth in any society. As so eloquently stated by Arthur C. Clarke "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic", almost creating a surreal tranquillity because of social stability in society.

**Comment [B21]:** Remember to link your example to your raised point.

**Comment [B22]:** By mentioning the prospect of recovery we remind the examiner subtly about how even in the medical field technology serves to provide assurance to mankind.

**Comment [B23]:** Reinstate your thesis at the end of your essay so your examiner is reminded of your point of view (POV)

**Comment [B24]:** These are a summarised version of the 4 paras which support your thesis, it neatly closes the essay and reminds the examiner of the content raised previously.

**Comment [B25]:** For a finishing touch you may choose to end off on a relevant quote or clever anecdote so the examiner has a favourable and lasting impression of your script.

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## Adapted and edited from Tan Heng Yeng- 13A03A

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of banning smoking in public places?

Loni Andreson once said "You're always better off if you quit smoking; it's never too late." Her opinion has aligned itself nicely with most governments in the world today who want to quip the smoking culture for the sake of its populace. Medical studies further suggest that smoking can lead to serious health problems for both the person smoking and the person sitting next to him. This is done to the dismay of those for whom a cigarette is a permanent extension of the lips. Hence, it has often been postulated that banning smoking in public places is a great way to eradicate the smoking culture and by enlarge I do agree that the advantages heavily outweigh the disadvantages of smoking in public places.

Tobacco smoke contains carbon monoxide, a gas which - if inhaled - can severely reduce the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood. It does so by combining with the blood pigment haemoglobin and preventing it from carrying the oxygen it was supposed to.

This action of carbon monoxide displays one great advantage of the ban on smoking in public places. People standing next to the smoker will, against their wishes, be inhaling the tobacco smoke emanating from the tip of the cigar or cigarette as well as that exhaled by the smoker. Thus, large quantities of carbon monoxide will be entering the "victim's" blood stream, wreaking havoc with his red blood cells. Tobacco smoke has also been shown to contain certain carcinogenic compounds which have the ability to mutate the DNA of anyone who inhales them, leading to probable cancers of the lungs, mouth and throats, and also secondary cancers at other sites in the body. These effects present another case in favour of the ban on smoking in public. Un-enlightened people standing next to the smoker will be increasing their risk of getting cancer tenfold.

Tobacco smoke also contains nicotine, a chemical which produces the same effects as adrenaline in the body. Nicotine increases the breathing rate, heart beat and blood pressure of the person who consumes it. Increased blood pressure may lead to hardening of the arteries, a condition called arthero sclerosis. Thus another advantage of the ban comes to light. Non-smokers who unwittingly inhale "second-hand" smoke are exposed to nicotine and its harmful effects.

Apart from the evident medical and health advantages of the ban on smoking in the public, certain social advantages also come to mind. Youth are very impressionable and emulate almost everything they see their elders doing. It is no wonder why numerous countries like Singapore have donned heavy censorship laws which restrict the screening of advertisements that promote the smoking culture. The ban on public smoking would further act as an impetus to prevent children from becoming smokers themselves. Coupled with education from school or counsellors, students can be taught of the harm that smoking brings. This would have positive future repercussions as it likely that educated youth are likely to veer from smoking themselves as first, it is not as accessible and they have also been taught not to do so; hence reinstating the need for the ban on public smoking areas.

Countries which provide free medical aid for their citizens have an added advantage, a monetary one. Respiratory illnesses caused by inhaling tobacco smoke are on the rise, resulting in an increase in the amount of money spent on medical care by these countries.



Most of the people suffering from these illnesses are non-smokers exposed to 'second-hand' smoke. By banning the smoking of any form of tobacco in public, the incidence of these illnesses is greatly decreased, thus saving millions which may be directed towards other projects.

However, the directive to ban smoking in public places acts as a clamp preventing a smoker from exercising his freedom as a democratic citizen. It is certainly an infringement on the rights of the smoker, rights which are guaranteed to any and all citizens of a democratic country. Initially when the government in Singapore, began their efforts to restrict smoking outdoors in 2009 with measures such as yellow box smoking corners in public areas such as hawker and shopping centres, there was an resounding shrill of anger from the smoking community as they had felt disenfranchised as above the already high taxes charged on smoking, they were now literally being boxed in and their avenues for smoking were being restricted. The unsettling cry of such individuals may have negative repercussion on the legitimacy of the government as well. However, if we were to re-consider things from a point of governance, it would be myopic to preserve the rights of so few and compromise the health of the majority.

All in all, the ban on smoking in public is a step in the right direction, towards a better future for us and the generations to come. All steps possible should be taken to discourage tobacco smoking, a potentially hazardous habit which may lead to death. We owe it to ourselves to do so.

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## Adapted and edited from Rae-Anne Tan – 13S03H

Do you agree that no artistic value exists in contemporary music?

A timeless tradition persists in society where the elderly often shake their heads in dismay at the music youth listen to. “This is so distasteful, such rubbish, nothing like the music we had in our day” they often profess. While some contemporary music – think of the strident, violent messages of gangsta rap or the screeching and screaming of heavy metal – may be loud and disconcerting, they do not make up the whole of contemporary music, nor do they necessarily lack artistic value. What is art? I believe it is any personal human expression that is original, creative and meaningful. There is much music being made today that has all these qualities. Hence it is very unfair to say that contemporary music has no artistic value.

**Comment [WU1]:** Usage of an anecdote, can help distinguish your essay. In this case, where such sayings are actually relatable, it gives your work a personal flair which is admirable.

**Comment [WU2]:** Debunk the belief that the question comes from. This is essentially a misconception and by debunking it, shows a higher level of thinking.

**Comment [WU3]:** A personal definition is highly useful so that you can mould your essay in a manner in a way that is uniquely yours. This adds onto the aforementioned personal voice and helps distinguish your work further,

The music of today is not only about loud, screaming singers and electric guitars or about commercial, trashy pop. There are also a significant number of musicians who are artists in the truest sense of the word – Rachael Yamagata, Nerina Pallot and Angie Mattson, to name just three. Their music is original and creative, without doubt. Beyond that, their tunes and lyrics are so touching and meaningful that they can reach the deepest core of your being, the way that a poem by John Donne or a painting by Vincent van Gogh could. Not only does such musicians’ work have artistic value, they possess it in abundance.

**Comment [WU4]:** When tackling essays on art it is highly pertinent to use examples that are relevant as specified by the examiner’s report. Using Yamagata, Pallot and Mattson, is a valiant starting point but dedicating more time to each of them is necessary in order to score well.

**Comment [WU5]:** Here we go about restating our point so as to re-highlight our thesis. Look at pg 89 of the lecture notes XII which show further methods to subtly restate your stand without sounding too repetitive.

Take for instance, Nerina Pallot’s song ‘Idaho’. Its beautiful, haunting piano refrain aside, it features lyrics that are highly poetic as well. “In the back of a car on a road in the dark/ in the stillicide, silently falling snow/ I’ve packed everything that I own in a bag/ And I’m driving, I’m driving to Idaho”. She not only crafted an evocative setting and a lovely rhyme, but even created a new word of her own, “stillicide”, which is highly original and open to artistic interpretation. Possibly it combines the words “stillness” and “homicide”, suggesting that the protagonist in the song finds the sheer stillness in the lonely, snowy scene so unbearable that she feels she could die from it. In this song, Idaho is not only a place – it stands for a state of mind, of being. It represents the elusive meaning in life which most of us search for.

**Comment [WU6]:** The accurate quotation is highly crucial. Do not try to quote inaccurate lyrics; it would come off as a hinderance to the flow of your essay.

**Comment [WU7]:** By explaining the exact artistic value, you elucidate to the examiner your point of view and thereby highlight how there is artistic value in contemporary music. It is important to restate this.

**Comment [WU8]:** By explaining the exact artistic value, you elucidate to the examiner your point of view and thereby highlight how there is artistic value in contemporary music. It is important to restate this. ( same pt)

Rachael Yamagata’s music features the finest use of modern technology married with traditional instruments to create a whole new emotional and even spiritual experience. The song ‘Sunday Afternoon’ opens with an electronic hum that starts slowly, and then builds with gradually growing intensity and vibration. It evokes in the listener the image of a shimmering light on the distant horizon that grows and grows. Then the electronic instruments are joined by a rich, soulful acoustic guitar. The song is a dark reflection on troubled love, something that many people can relate to and find solace in.

**Comment [WU9]:** Here the point being made is akin to the aforementioned one- beauty is subtly implied in the work but now we make a different point by discussing the psychological state of mind one experiences.

**Comment [WU10]:** The deployment of a specific example is pertinent in order to score really well. This is especially the case for essays on the arts.

**Comment [WU11]:** To be able to paint a clear picture of solace, the juxtaposition of the instruments is crucial in the case of Sunday Afternoons.



[What, then, of the mainstream “commercial” artistes who dominate the airwaves and the pop charts? Surely these are more prominent and profitable in contemporary music today.]  
 [However, I contend that “commercial” and artistic may not be mutually exclusive. The incredibly popular Lady Gaga is a case in point. Her hit ‘Bad Romance’ begins with “I want your ugly/ I want your disease/ I want your everything/ as long as it’s free/ I want your love/ love love love I want your love”. It is creative and original in that it uses “ugly” as a noun. Also, the “ugly” she refers to can be fairly interpreted on many levels, just like any work of art. Perhaps it refers to ugliness of the heart, ugliness of the face, ugliness of the soul, or even the ugliness of one’s past. The song is an imaginative, sexy exploration of the dark, self-destructive romance and attractions that most of us go through at some point in our lives. Like many other works of art, it drives us to ponder the mystery and fallibility within our very nature. It is deeply meaningful in an artistic way.]

**Comment [WU12]:** Pg 67 lect notes XII

**Comment [WU13]:** This is exactly the level of higher level we are encouraging. The spheres are not mutually exclusive. The literary meaning in the works do exist and possess an artistic value as well.

[Art also frequently takes up a cause as artists seek to make the world a better place.]  
 Contemporary music is no exception in this regard. The [Indonesian trip-hop band Everybody Loves Irene has a profoundly thought-provoking song titled ‘The Big Bang Prophecy’ [which makes the radical suggestion that since human beings refuse to stop destroying their environment and all our efforts to protect Mother Earth are doomed, we should obliterate the human race with nuclear weapons to save the Earth. Of course we need not take their message at face value, but the provocative approach taken by the band makes the song not only meaningful, but impactful as well.]

**Comment [WU14]:** Introduction of a thesis again but it is important to ensure that the points do not overlap. Many students are guilty of doing this! Please take note!

**Comment [WU15]:** Showing a varied range of examples will push your essay into a higher band range. Focusing too much on the western scene may offer a myopic pov and raise the question if other cultures have been considered.

To be sure, there are some pop and rock songs that are very lacking in meaning. Some of Britney Spears’ or the Pussycat Dolls’ songs, for instance, have little substance or meaning. Some of their songs are meant only to entertain or titillate, [for example the Pussycat Dolls’ song ‘Buttons’ which is focused on undressing your lover.] But to say that all contemporary music is like that would be like saying that all newspapers are like *The Sun*.

**Comment [WU16]:** Here we expose the fallacy which plagues the commercial scene and tackle the issue which makes current music “appear” valueless.

[Therefore it is very unfair to say that contemporary music has no artistic value.]  
 Contemporary human beings are not so different from people of the past. Some of us just want to be entertained by music. Others want music to make a connection with our heart and soul, to take us to a higher realm of feeling, of existence. In contemporary music, there is a song – or a few hundred songs – to suit every taste and sensibility.

**Comment [WU17]:** Do not forget to restate your thesis so by the end of your essay, the original argument is not lost.

## Adapted and edited from Wen Xingyue-14S06Q

Is capital punishment justifiable? Discuss.

Capital punishment is based upon the philosophy of "an eye for an eye". As noted by one of the greatest political figure from India, Mahatma Gandhi "An eye for an eye ends up making the whole world blind". Moreover, capital punishment is an inhumane act which is only meant to wreak vengeance. Killing a murderer is not a justice; in fact it is tantamount to committing a new crime. Although criminals cannot be forgiven for their heinous crimes, capital punishment is by no means justifiable.

Society has always used punishment to discourage would-be criminals from unlawful action. Since society has the highest interest in preventing murder, it should use the strongest punishment available to deter murder, and that is the death penalty. If murderers are sentenced to death and executed, potential murderers will think twice before killing for fear of losing their own life. For years, criminologists analyzed murder rates to see if they fluctuated with the likelihood of convicted murderers being executed, but the results were inconclusive. Then in 1973 Isaac Ehrlich employed a new kind of analysis which produced results showing that for every inmate who was executed, 7 lives were spared because others were deterred from committing murder.

Those who believe that deterrence justifies the execution of certain offenders bear the burden of proving that the death penalty is a deterrent. The overwhelming conclusion from years of deterrence studies is that the death penalty is, at best, no more of a deterrent than a sentence of life in prison. The Ehrlich studies have been widely discredited. In fact, some criminologists, such as William Bowers of Northeastern University, maintain that the death penalty has the opposite effect: that is, society is brutalized by the use of the death penalty, and this increases the likelihood of more murder. Even most supporters of the death penalty now place little or no weight on deterrence as a serious justification for its continued use. States in the United States that do not employ the death penalty generally have lower murder rates than states that do. The same is true when the U.S. is compared to countries similar to it. The U.S., with the death penalty, has a higher murder rate than the countries of Europe or Canada, which do not use the death penalty. The death penalty is not a deterrent because most people who commit murders either do not expect to be caught or do not carefully weigh the differences between a possible execution and life in prison before they act. Frequently, murders are committed in moments of passion or anger, or by criminals who are substance abusers and acted impulsively. As someone who presided over many of Texas's executions, former Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox has remarked, "It is my own experience that those executed in Texas were not deterred by the existence of the death penalty law. I think in most cases you'll find that the murder was committed under severe drug and alcohol abuse." There is no conclusive proof that the death penalty acts as a better deterrent than the threat of life imprisonment. A survey of the former and present presidents of the country's top academic criminological societies found that 84% of these experts rejected the notion that research had demonstrated any deterrent effect from the death penalty. Once in prison, those serving life sentences often settle into a routine and are less of a threat to commit violence than other prisoners. Moreover, most states now have a sentence of life without parole. Prisoners who are given this sentence will never be released. Thus, the safety of society can be assured without using capital punishment.



Moreover, many innocent people are sentenced to death because of human errors and legal discrepancies. Execution is finalized from the trial, examination of evidences, and so on which allows room for human errors. For instance, in the USA 130 people sentenced to death have been found innocent since 1973 and are released from death row after they received the irrevocable punishment. Many people have been scapegoats in other countries as well. What about the value of life of such victims? The mental distress caused to the innocent's family and friends can be immense. Isn't it beyond tenet to kill somebody for the crime that they have not committed?

As moral creatures, humans deserve praise for good deeds, and punishment for bad ones. Punishment may range from a slap on the wrist to death, but the punishment must fit the crime. This is known as *lex talionis*, or in common jargon, "an eye for an eye." Abolitionists often insist that if one were to argue for *lex talionis* justice we must be prepared to rape rapists, beat sadists, and burn down the houses of arsonists. Certainly, this argument is myopic at best and really only the case if we take the *lex talionis* literally. Criminals do deserve those punishments, but we needn't take it literally. The ancient for example, did not; They allowed for monetary compensation for physical or property damage. Morally, it is wrong to simply incarcerate someone for murder. A sentence of life in an air-conditioned, cable-equipped prison where a person gets free meals three times a day, personal recreation time, and regular visits with friends and family is a slap in the face of morality. Naysayers will deny that not all prisons are like the one cited. That argument is yet again myopic as regardless of the accommodation standard, the loss of freedom cannot compare to a loss of life.

Abolitionists claim that the death penalty is a means of revenge. It is not. If the purpose of the state in executing murderers was retribution or revenge, then criminals would be executed in the same way they that murdered their victims. The point of the death penalty, however, is not to see how much pain can be unleashed on the murderer but to bring him to justice. In reality, the murderer actually gets off easy when he is sentenced to death in the United States. There are five methods of execution used in the United States: lethal injection, electrocution, lethal gas, hanging, and firing squad. The most commonly used methods today are lethal injection and the electric chair. If a person is lethally injected, he is first put to sleep with thiopental sodium, and then he is administered potassium chloride that will stop his heart. The criminal dies from aesthetic overdose and respiratory and cardiac arrest while he or she is unconscious. As for the electric chair, there is an initial jolt of 2,300 volts which lasts for eight seconds, followed by a low-voltage jolt of 1,000 volts for 20 seconds and finally a jolt of 2,300 volts for eight seconds. The murderer is rendered unconscious immediately, or within the first eight seconds at most, as the initial high-voltage jolt kills the brain. The subsequent jolts stop the heart in case it is still beating. The precision and care for the criminal's final excision reduces their overall pain in their final moments. When compared to the nature of some heinous crimes of murders and rapists, who torture their victims over a prolonged period of time, it almost seems like a laughable sentiment for abolitionists to postulate the further removal of the death sentence as more fair.

However, while the aforementioned two points are valid, they fail to account for the fallible nature of an individual. Human beings are fallible. They often make mistakes. Some flaws may be too severe to tolerate. Thus, criminals should be given punishment undoubtedly. Imprisonment and other forms of punishment provide them a chance to repent

and change. The movie Shawshank redemption through the eyes of a character named Red highlights how being institutionalised, gives one an opportunity to repent and allow for the change one's perspective. Further, many prisoners, have found therapy groups, albeit mostly religious, have given them a chance to reconcile with their wrong doings and crave for an opportunity to turn over a new leaf. The annual Yellow Ribbon Prison Run held in Singapore pays testament to this point, as Singaporeans from all was of life come to run alongside ex-convicts to show them that we are all in the same race of life and ever can be given a second chance to re-join society as long as they make a change for the better. Capital punishment n the other hand denies a felon the chance to improve even if they have repented, their apology will hold no value in light of the death penalty.

On the whole capital punishment is not a demand of people today. Many countries are on the verge to abolish death penalty because human beings are sacrosanct and such punishment is against many religions. Although criminals are guilty they should be given an opportunity to realize the mistake they have committed. Therefore, I contend that death penalty is an evil of 21st century.

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## Adapted and edited from Pang Teng Sheng Kelvin- 14S03G

To what degree has technology possessed a negative impact on the skill levels of people?

Humans, with their awe inspiring ingenuity, have for centuries conceived, invented and designed machines to satisfy their desires and make their lives easier. Machines act as multipliers of human ability that allow people to accomplish more in life. It is ironic, however, that in creating machines that are ever more useful, Man has made himself ever less useful. Machines have made human beings redundant in many lines of work, and even where humans are still needed in the production of goods and delivery of services, their levels of skill have largely declined. It may be true that more advanced technology has created a need for new, high-tech skills which have replaced many of the old skills. However, it is this writer's contention that the new skills pale in comparison with the old skills in terms of the level of intricacy and finesse. Hence I believe that technology has had a negative impact on the skill levels of people to a large extent.

**Comment [WU1]:** It is important that the first statement you make, addresses the key issue of the question. In this scenario, we choose to **take** a historic route.

**Comment [WU2]:** Begin to state the thesis of the essay which is that tech has made the need for man increasingly redundant, therefore, it has a paralysing impact on their skill level.

**Comment [WU3]:** Stating the limitation of your thesis is highly useful as it elucidates an element of balance in your work. (i.e your anti-thesis)

**Comment [WU4]:** The ultimatum and concluding to your intro, should leave your examiner being fully aware of your stand. If you need to repeat it for the sake of clarification, do so!

**Comment [WU5]:** Thesis statement should be brought about in a concise manner. The explanation can be longer but do not ramble on pointlessly when trying to make your point.

The automation process has come at the cost of our professional skills. Across a myriad of industries, the role of human beings has been minimised as machines take over a myriad of functions. In manufacturing, processes from the slicing of potatoes to the soldering of computer chips have been automated. In the aviation sector, today's pilots rarely fly their aircraft manually, but rather through a highly sophisticated 'fly-by-wire' system which uses an electronic interface; flight control computers determine how to control the actuators to provide the desired response. Commands from the computers are even input without the pilot's knowledge. With autopilot systems, pilots are often actively involved only in the takeoff and landing phases of flight. While a pilot's skill is called upon in a crisis situation or when the avionics fail, these are only exceptional situations – the level of skill required of the pilot is considerably lower than before.

**Comment [WU6]:** It would be prudent not to make sweeping statements when talking about industries. A specification such as the manufacturing process of cars: utilisation of Fordism, can also be consider as an alternative.

**Comment [WU7]:** At the end of your point (not necessarily the paragraph) you must restate your thesis- skills being lowered.

In the arena of sports, our skills have also largely declined as a result of technological advancement. The proliferation of new and ever more advanced forms of indoor entertainment has enticed us to carry out more and more of our recreational activities in the comfort of our homes. In the past, children typically went outdoors to have a good time. They played football and other sports and swam in rivers. While sports are still popular with the youth, many have become addicted to electronic games played on their tablet computers and video game consoles like the PlayStation. On average, they spend significantly less time than before playing sports. English football manager Harry Redknapp has bemoaned the 'PlayStation culture' which is making it increasingly difficult to find promising young English footballers.

**Comment [WU8]:** Thesis statement should be brought about in a concise manner; here we focus on the impact of sports. Make sure in your planning that your points do not overlap; this is called repetition and forfeits credit from an examiner's pov.

**Comment [WU9]:** Identifying a pertinent trend such as the aforementioned without considering that sports are still popular is not wise. Sports are still popular hence the method used here where we debunk the trend is better to elucidate your knowledge of this phenomena.

[To be sure, playing video games takes skill too. However, these skills have little value or substance in the real world. [Being able to move your fingers dexterously is far less useful in real life than the ability to move your whole body dexterously, as the latter gives you a feeling of physical confidence which can then translate into greater overall confidence and self-esteem as a person. [Furthermore, the latter can save your life in a dangerous situation.]

**Comment [WU10]:** Here we are rebutting the anti-thesis that video games have decreased skills as a whole. By rebutting this, and then shutting down the argument thereafter we bring an element of balance to the essay.

**Comment [WU11]:** Shutting down of the argument to re-propagate the thesis.

Perhaps the most deleterious deterioration in human skills is in the area of interpersonal skills. Information technology (IT) as well as mobile communications technology undoubtedly enhanced the speed and efficiency of communication by leaps and bounds. However, the obsession with speed and efficiency in communication has made people very reluctant to spend time to express themselves thoughtfully, articulately and beautifully in language. [The art of communication – a time-honoured skill – has been sacrificed on the altar of speed and efficiency. [Where once people would spend hours lovingly writing a letter to their friends and loved ones sharing their deepest thoughts and feelings, today they spend five seconds posting a picture or brief comment on the other person's Facebook page, and do not even bother to type their words in full. [They use "n" for "and" and "LOL" for "laugh out loud", and emoji become a convenient substitute for a thoughtfully crafted expression of one's feelings. [Seeking to move at the blinding speed of computers, people today also lack the patience and the attention span to listen carefully to what others say and to ponder it. Of course, listening well is just as central to good communication as speaking or writing well. There is a tendency today to rush to judgement, as evidenced by the flood of visceral, frequently hare-brained comments on the online social network Twitter. [Many people have experienced a severe degradation of their communication skills.]

**Comment [WU12]:** Repetition of the thesis to ensure immense focus.

**Comment [WU13]:** The example used here is ideal as this is a contemporary trend and examiners like when such cases are used appropriately in your work.

**Comment [WU14]:** Good way to end the paragraph as we re-use the words in the question hence elucidating the question's focus.

**Comment [WU15]:** When you choose to discuss interpersonal skills since it is akin to communication, one must make sure it doesn't overlap. Refer to content package pg 63 for a more in depth look.

**Comment [WU16]:** Personal opinions are allowed for, but must be justified and not too heavily peppered around your essay.

[Interpersonal skills, however, go well beyond communication skills. [Two other precious capabilities sacrificed on the altar of technology are empathy and social skills. [I consider empathy to be a skill, not just a quality, because it can be improved with practice. [When one spends countless hours engaging in battles in a virtual fantasy world or staring at pictures on Instagram rather than engaging in the more holistic verbal and nonverbal communication face-to-face with others, it becomes more difficult to put oneself in a real person's shoes. Psychological research has shown that young people who spend a lot of time playing online games have lower levels of empathy than their peers.

[Some may argue that people have more than replaced their old skills with very sophisticated IT skills. [Indeed, it is easy to form this impression when one sees the female executive in her chic office outfit sliding her fingers on her smartphone or tablet and running application after application. However, the truth is that the gadgets of today are extremely user-friendly, almost idiot-proof. [The skill levels needed to operate today's computers cannot hold a candle to the finesse that our ancestors in the days of yore needed to carry out such intricate tasks as

**Comment [WU17]:** The anti-thesis can be brought at the end of your essay, but it is important to ensure it does not contradict any point you have previously raised.



stitching a garment by hand, hunting with a bow and arrow, and performing surgery without advanced tools.

**Comment [WU18]:** Yet by the ending, we still get the sense that the thesis is more valid and that overall tone must constantly be achieved should one want to achieve the best grades possible.

[In summation, I strongly concur with the sentiment that technology has had a negative impact on the skill levels of people]. The gains in skill are unable to compensate for what has been lost. While the progress of technology is inexorable, we should be watchful that it does not bring about the regression of the human species. A little reflection is in order: we should once in a while take a step back from automation and practise our good, old-fashioned skills so that we retain our wonderful human keenness and competitiveness. One can buy a manual car instead of an automatic one; perform mental calculations rather than use a calculator; and write a long, heartfelt letter to our dear friend instead of a ten-word tweet. The machines may be impressive, but let's not forget who designed them.

**Comment [WU19]:** Restating your POV is highly important for yourself and the examiner to show you have not detracted from your original argument.

**Comment [WU20]:** Use of pertinent anecdote is possible.

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## Adapted and edited from Michelle Kwok Pei Chin - 10S04B

Is it possible to protect the environment when many countries require increasing amounts of energy to progress?

In today's world, where world population, industrial production and economic growth are surging at breakneck pace, energy consumption is expanding and mankind's insatiable desire for energy, arable land and natural resources are both depleting natural resources and damaging the environment. I believe that economic progress today necessitates mankind's utilisation of the Earth's resources and damage of the environment. However, I believe that it is possible to both enjoy economic progress and protect the environment at the same time, especially with advances in alternative energy technology and a greater involvement of the public, government and public firms in the protection of the environment.

There is, largely, a false dichotomy between economic progress and protecting the environment. This is because, among other reasons, of the availability of alternative sources of energy – not that of crude oil or coal – which can power industries and drive economic progress while protecting or doing only minimal damage to the environment. Such technology includes nuclear energy, which use does not emit carbon and where by-products can be stored underground without damage to the environment. Other forms of alternative energy also include that of wind and solar energy, where although some might seem prohibitive and capable of providing only small amounts of energy, may actually allow entire towns to be powered if harnessed and distributed efficiently. This is the case of Saint Daid's, a town in Southern Wales, which successfully leveraged on such technology to reduce its household carbon footprint to almost zero – a testament to how technology can allow an economy to function and progress while protecting the environment at the same time. However, despite the efficacy of such technology, I conceded that alternative energy sources are no panacea for today's trade-off between progress and the environment as yet and this is why the world still consumes 85 million barrels of dirty-burning crude oil today. This is because alternative energy sources are still, in general, not as cheap as drilling for oil and hence are not widely adopted. However, I believe that in the near future, with today's pace in the advancement of alternative energy technology and in order to circumvent the predicted disaster of oil running out by 2050, alternative energy will become cheaper and widely used to the point that it drives economic progress while protecting the environment at the same time – a very possible eventual outcome.

Another reason why I believe that protecting the environment and economic progress is possible and become ever less mutually exclusive is the increase in environmental awareness and desire to protect the environment, whether for altruistic reasons or for self-interest. Today, 30 percent of paper and plastic waste in the United States of America (USA), as stated by the U.S. Environmental Agency, is recycled. This is despite the fact that recycling is often a low profit margin business that requires government subsidies to operate. A 30 percent recycling rate is an achievement that shows how a government can push for both progress and environmental protection at the same time with enough political will. Also, air travel, the bloodlines of the world economic machine, is beginning to become cleaner with the foray of firms such as France's Climat Mundi, which encourages air travelers and gives them a medium to compensate for the carbon they had caused to be emitted during their flights. This is done by paying an extra but small sum over the air ticket's price, which then



goes to fund tree-planting events and to replace the dirty-burning wood stoves of poor Sub-Saharan Africans with cleaner electric or petroleum stoves. Of course, dissenters would say that such schemes only apply to altruistic people and governments which are few and far between. However, I believe that such choices are increasingly becoming ones that are made based on self-interest as people are feeling the negative effects of environmental damage. For instance, in October 2008, well after the Olympic and Paralympic Games concluded, Beijing re-imposed car quotas because it was in its interest to reduce pollution levels to protect people's health and to attract tourists and investors. Thus, I believe that self-interest and altruism are, more than ever, leading to "green" decisions being made which protect the environment while not or insignificantly inhibiting economic progress.

The final reason why I believe progress and environmental protection may go hand-in-hand is that of the system of Capitalism and the desire of businesses to maximize profits. The increase in environmental consciousness and the desire of consumers to purchase "green" products and cleaner cars have led to a paradigm shift in markets where companies are now incentivized to produce green products or to sponsor green movements. Companies such as Toyota and Honda have taken advantage of such a change in drivers' preferences by creating smaller, cleaner cars and hydroelectric cars, leading them to "progress" and turn profits while protecting the environment at the same time, unlike Ford and General Motors, whose gas-guzzling cars have led them into business losses in the order of billions of U.S. dollars in 2008. Appearing green is also a trend for companies which are in the service sector. Wall Street research firm Standard and Poors has concluded in 2008 that "green" corporate citizenship adds profits to a company's balance sheet. This could explain why highly respected Wall Street firms Goldman Sachs and the Bank of America have been sponsoring environmental reform projects in China, ensuring that they do not provide loans to illegal loggers and promoting themselves as "green banks". Thus, it is seen that capitalism and businesses' inherent desire for profits can and is increasingly leading to firms both progressing and protecting the environment at the same time. The environmentally sustainable growth of businesses could quite possibly be the wave of the near future.

I believe that it is possible to protect the environment while striving for economic progress, notwithstanding the latter requiring increasingly more energy to accomplish. This, though, is contingent on the fact that the development of alternative energy sources and the increase in environmental consciousness among people, governments and businesses are sustained at the current pace. To do this, I would suggest that more weight be placed on the advice given by the United Nations (UN) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to include the developing nations in Annex I of the Kyoto Protocol and for more countries to adopt the European Climate Exchange's system of pollution permit trading. With that, the possibility of economic progress and environmental protection will be increasingly close to being realized.

## Adapted and edited from Wan Poh Ling- 14S03G

"Some of the most important lessons in life are learnt away from school," Discuss.

**Comment [WU1]:** Do NOT make the common mistake of dedicating paragraphs discussing what happens in school. This is a comparative essay. Discuss things that happen outside school.

[While it may be true that school does equip us with useful knowledge and skills, the experiences of humankind throughout history make it eminently clear that learning transcends any single building or institution.] Heinrich Heine once said, ["If the Romans had been obliged to learn Latin, they would never have found time to conquer the world."] [We learn from the playgrounds; we learn from factories. We learn from the tough streets; we learn from the football field. Indeed, far from the four walls of school, the world is vast and offers us a limitless scope for learning.] Every situation, every place, and every chapter of our lives offers us an opportunity to learn something.

**Comment [WU2]:** Discuss the key issue in the question; here it would be that learning transcends the institutional arena of a school.

**Comment [WU3]:** If you want to quote ensure that the quote is relevant like this one and supports the argument you are going to make. Do not force a quote.

**Comment [WU4]:** By elucidating the myriad of environments where one can learn briefly you show the scope and depth of your analysis; illustrating that you have accounted for numerous arenas.

[Unlike school, the world is often realistically depicted as a dangerous place where one ought to look out for their safety.] This is probably the lesson that most stands out in my mind. A few years ago, a student from Raffles Institution, the top secondary school in Singapore, was stabbed by a group of gangsters after he allegedly stared at them in a public place.

**Comment [WU5]:** The opening statement of this paragraph; is your thesis which supports the idea that there are lessons learnt outside school.

Fortunately, he survived and recovered from his injuries, but I remember thinking that this boy was perhaps the epitome of a book-smart, street-foolish youth. One has to be careful when encountering strangers in one's everyday life. Strangers are an unknown quantity. One should not stare at them and try not to offend a stranger, especially one who appears to be potentially aggressive. [If one was well versed in "street-culture", or the ways of the street, a mere observance of the outward demeanour of people, would be enough to sniff out potential trouble.] Within the controlled environment of a school, where a code of conduct presides heavily, it is very difficult to learn such lessons.

**Comment [WU6]:** This is a form of analysis—where you explain the given example. This is necessary in

**Comment [WU7]:** It is important to make a constant comparison back to schools; since this is a comparative essay

[Even though students are still minors and naturally dependent on their parents to some extent, I believe it is most beneficial for students to take up a part-time job or temporary job to earn at least part of their own keep.] In doing so, they widen their horizons, being exposed to a wider cross-section of society — people of different age groups and social backgrounds. They learn that no matter how difficult their own lives are, there are others with bigger problems and heavier burdens to carry. [This helps to put one's problems in perspective: a student might go to work feeling like her life is the worst as the boy she likes has not reciprocated her affections, but discover a colleague of the same age who has to care for her wheelchair-bound mother stricken with a heart problem and kidney failure.] I personally learned empathy and compassion from my temporary work during my schooldays, to stop feeling sorry for myself and reach out to others more in need.]

**Comment [WU8]:** The focus here; is the concept of job experience. Make sure your points do not sound repetitive.

**Comment [WU9]:** You should often provide analysis like this where you go into a deeper analysis of your thesis. Students often forget that the more analysis provided, the more coherent the argument develops to be.

**Comment [WU10]:** This is the idea of comparative scope; Looking beyond the self at the trends of the world. This is a good point to mention as even if you were to meet someone like this in school; you don't actively work alongside hence empathy for their situation would hardly exist.

**Comment [WU11]:** The usage of a personal example like this is NOT encouraged in GP. You can use it for time to time when you feel a real life example is not suitable or you prefer to add a personal fair to your essay.



[Further, the exposure to working world also enlightens a young person on the value of money. [When one merely collects pocket money from one's parents, he tends to think that money comes easily – perhaps that it even grows on trees. After a nine-hour shift at McDonald's, however, he is likely to feel very differently. He learns that money is usually the fruit of hard, exhausting work. [He learns that the pieces of paper he takes from his parents were the product of his parents' blood, sweat, tears — and sacrifice].

**Comment [WU12]:** As it is another paragraph on work, usage of the preposition "further" is particularly useful as it explains that you are making a new point on the same subject matter.

**Comment [WU13]:** The juxtaposition of the 9-hour shift balances nicely with the word play of "blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice." Examiners can see when the essay is well-worded and structured. You will be credited for such work.

[Indeed, one's relationship with one's family is one of the most precious things in life. We often devote too much time to our studies and too little to developing healthy relationships with our family. [A relationship is like a plant: it needs to be watered, fertilised and cared for if it is to flourish. If we mistreat it, or neglect it, it will be in very poor shape; it could even die. Hence if we reflect on the way we relate to our families, the way that we treat them, we might find that we tend to take them for granted because we assume that they will always be there for us. We might find that we hurt their feelings carelessly and callously, and fail to appreciate them for the unconditional love they give us. [For instance, when our mother asks us whether we would like to have lunch at home, we often just offer a cursory, indifferent reply as our minds are more focused on our friends and hobbies. If we are open to learning outside of school, we can learn how precious the love of our family is and how much more steadfast their love is than the often transient and superficial affections of our so-called "friends"]

**Comment [WU14]:** Remember, you are graded on the relevance of the points you raise. This particular one is very important. Family is a vital discussion point.

In sum, we students should always remember that school is only the institution of formal education, one that can never fully prepare us for the life that is to come. With its theoretical emphasis and hypothetical exercises, school lessons can only go so far to teach us how to live in this world. While we should be positive about learning in the classroom, we should also seek to learn from the world and be inspired to reach wider horizons of thought and action.

**Comment [WU15]:** Again, avoid where possible. In this case it is "ok" but if you have a real-life example on hand it would be better.

## Adapted and edited from Chua Jun Yan- 13A01A

The problem of waste has plagued our societies. How far is recycling a solution to this crisis?

With the rise in world population and consumption, the problem of waste has worsened. In our attempt to curb this problem, solutions such as recycling, using of landfills and incinerators, educational campaigns and regulations have been widely adopted. In my opinion, recycling is certainly one of the answers to the problem of waste. However, inherent problems such as the high cost of recycling and advanced technology have made recycling economically unfeasible especially for the less developed countries. Nevertheless, recycling as compared to other ways to minimize the problem of waste is much more environmentally friendlier and is least objectionable. As such, I feel that recycling must be adopted and used in tandem with other measures such as educational campaigns and laws. These solutions would then be able to complement as well as supplement the limitations of recycling, making the approach to the problem of waste a more effective one.

Recycling can be a feasible answer to the problem of waste but it is mainly targeted at developed countries that possess the necessary advanced technology and are able to afford the high costs associated with recycling. Despite the advancement in technology, recycling today is still an expensive tool as compared to other measures like land filling and incineration. Therefore to less developed nations, recycling is simply economically unfeasible. According to the Genuine Progress Index, a research group that has spent a decade monitoring the recycling programmes in Nova Scotia, recycling cost the province US\$18 million a year more as compared to throwing the waste into landfills. Similarly in California and New Jersey, local public utilities authorities have reported that recycling cost the country over half a million dollars more in 1995. Hence to the less developed countries, recycling is simply beyond their reach due to the population's generally low average income, preventing them from affording recycling programmes in their budgets. Even though recycling may be a feasible answer to the problem of waste to the developed countries, this is certainly not the case for the less developed countries. In this light, technology must improve to reduce the cost of recycling before it can be embraced even by less developed countries.

Recycling can be a viable solution to the problem of waste in the environmental sense because, relative to other methods, it creates less pollution and is more sustainable over a longer period of time. Over the years, the magnitude of environmental degradation has increased, and with global warming, recycling, a method that is environmentally friendly seems least objectionable as compared to other conventional forms of waste treatment. For example, incineration releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide as well as other toxic gases into the atmosphere, accelerating global warming and adversely affecting our health. Similarly, land filling can result in water pollution and affects the ecology negatively. Greenpeace, a world environmental research group, discovered that the major wells in the Philippines contained a high level of metal content beyond the safe drinking limits set by the World Health Organisation. This unfortunate pollution would not have occurred if not for the landfills situated near the wells. The metals buried in the landfills managed to dissolve and seep into the ground water, causing water pollution. In this light, it is rather clear that recycling is a much better tool to solve the problem of waste. This is because studies have shown that for every ton of paper recycled, 17 small trees are saved and air pollution is greatly reduced. An example to illustrate the environmental-friendliness of recycling can be



seen in the success of recycling programmes in the United States. The country managed to save 1.3 million tons of iron ore, 8.2 million trees and successfully reduced greenhouse gas emissions by two million metric tons in 2004 due to the nationwide recycling programmes that the country implemented. Therefore, in my opinion, recycling is certainly a good answer to the problem of waste especially in today's world, where environmental conservation is increasingly embraced by most countries.

Recycling is certainly one of the viable answers to the problem of waste in countries with limited land. Recycling as compared to landfills takes up less space and is therefore suitable for countries with a small land area. A good example to illustrate the influence of physical factors on the choice of measures to the problem of waste is Singapore. Singapore has a limited land area but an escalating quantity of waste. There was a 2.09 million tonnes increase in the amount of waste from 1970 to 2005. To make things worse, the lifespan of the Pulau Semakau landfill of Singapore is expected to last till only 2030, and this is provided that the present generation does not generate more waste per capita. Hence the country implemented the National Recycling Programme in 2001 to minimize the amount of waste disposed to the limited landfills, prolonging the lifespan of the landfills. By 2004, the rate of participation by households in this nationwide programme has more than tripled to 51%. Therefore from the example of Singapore, it is evident that recycling is indeed a feasible answer to the problem of waste since it occupies less space as compared to conventional measures like landfills. Hence recycling is certainly one of the solutions to the problem of waste in developed countries that has limited land area.

Although recycling is one of the least objectionable answers to the problem of waste, it has to be used in tandem with campaigns and laws that tackle the root of the problem – the excessive wastage of resources. The over-consuming societies of the developed world will continue to waste more resources excessively if recycling is not encouraged, made more convenient or appealing as an option. In Singapore for instance, the National Environment Agency (NEA) organizes road shows and puts up posters to encourage recycling. In addition, NEA together with the Singapore Environment Council implemented 'Bring Your Own Bag Day' to further strengthen their activities. An additional 10 cents is charged on these days for every plastic bag used, and the money collected is used for environmental projects. Similarly in China, the government has taken a step further to ban the use of disposable plastic bags nationwide due to the massive problem of accumulated unbiodegradable waste caused by plastic bags. In the UK, the British government has passed a bill indicating that charges would be imposed on single-use carrier bags unless retailers take action voluntarily to cut down on the ballooning pollution caused by the use of plastic bags. These are just some examples to illustrate the idea that in order for recycling to be effective, consumers have to be educated and informed on the consequences of excessive wastage of resources and how they can play a role to minimize the problem of waste. Furthermore, law and regulations should also be introduced and passed to prevent the problem of waste from intensifying. Other complementary measures would be to make using reusable bags and the recycling of materials more attractive, such as saving costs on bags or even making recycling bins more accessible. Hence while I agree that recycling is one effective answer to the problem of waste, it has to be used simultaneously with educational campaigns and regulations as that would complement recycling and mitigate its limitations.

Recycling is certainly a good solution to the problem of waste. However, we must acknowledge that due to the high costs and advanced technology needed for recycling,

developed countries are therefore in a better position to embrace recycling as compared to far less developed countries. Although recycling is suitable for small countries with small land area and is more environmentally friendly, it does not eliminate the underlying cause to the problem of waste. Hence recycling should be implemented together with educational campaigns and regulations for it to be most effective.

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## Adapted and edited from Bernice Yong- 13S03N

How realistic a goal, is it to achieve increased prosperity for **all**, in your society?

Depicted as a theme park for the rich and a metropolis where East and West do meet, Singapore has become one of the most advanced and affluent nations in the world today. Singapore has embraced globalisation and opened its doors proudly to foreign talent and capital, and succeeded so emphatically that we now have the world's highest concentration of millionaire households – at 17 percent. But beneath the shiny exterior of landmark skyscrapers and luxury cars, lies a darker reality: the poorer members of our society clambering to make ends meet. In order to achieve the goal of increased prosperity for all, we need not only to grow the economic pie but slice it more equally. This is exactly what the government is striving to do. Despite the immense challenges we face, I believe that Singapore has what it takes to achieve these goals with a high degree of success. Hence I believe we can realistically attain greater material well-being for the great majority of our population, but not all.

**Comment [WU1]:** Since we are talking about Singapore, it would be important to set up a current and personal impression so the examiner can comprehend your view of the country.

**Comment [WU2]:** The juxtaposition of poor and rich is necessary in order to elucidate that there is a reason to achieve increased prosperity for all in your society. We have to remember that if it is deemed as a 'goal' there must be a reason for why it is so.

**Comment [WU3]:** It important to state your thesis so that the examiner can comprehend your POV.

**Comment [WU4]:** Thesis point. Refer to page 54 lect notes XII

While Singapore has reaped the benefits of globalisation with its highly open economy, we are also constantly buffeted by the fierce and growing competition that it brings. Emerging economies like Thailand, South Africa and Brazil constantly nip away at our heels, climbing the value chain and threatening to eat our lunch. Many multinationals such as HGST, a US-based hard disk drive manufacturer, have closed or downsized their factories in Singapore to move to a lower-cost location. It is a constant challenge to stay ahead of the competition to even maintain the size of our pie, let alone expand it. But little Singapore possesses enduring competitive advantages that other countries find very hard to replicate. Besides the aforementioned clean and capable government, security and stability, outstanding infrastructure and strong rule of law, we are also free from natural disasters. A multinational can set up its headquarters or semiconductor plant here without fear that it will be shattered by an earthquake. Furthermore, Singaporeans are in the unique position of being fluent in both English and Asian languages such as Chinese, Malay and Tamil, and can thus act as an invaluable bridge between East and West. Hence I have little doubt that we can continue to grow the economic pie.

**Comment [WU5]:** The idea of economic competitiveness as Singapore has a population veering to work in industries that are less blue-collar or in the secondary industry.

**Comment [WU6]:** Here we analyse the raised problem in the introduction

**Comment [WU7]:** Again discussing the pretext that was set up in the introduction through the introduction of bilingualism

Furthermore, our government is very determined to slice the pie more equally and reduce inequality. While there is some truth to the claims that the government had become rather insensitive and unempathetic to the poor in recent years, the disappointing election result for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) at the 2011 General Election – where the PAP retained power but with the lowest vote share since independence of 60.1 percent – has propelled the government to redistribute wealth much more aggressively and create greater

prosperity for the majority. Among its recent wealth redistribution policies are higher taxes on big houses and cars and more generous subsidies for everything from public housing to preschool education, healthcare and utilities.

**Comment [WU8]:** It is possible to discuss Singapore gov's care package. Where the surplus wealth is split amongst the population; prioritising the poorer groups. Means testing is yet another good example.

What if, in our eagerness to redistribute wealth, we destroy our strong work ethic and bring our government to bankruptcy or near-bankruptcy, a fate that has befallen several European welfare states? After all, in recent years, we have seen once-prosperous nations such as Greece and Spain succumb to the folly of populism and brought to financial ruin. Sceptics may paint this depressing picture for Singapore, but our country remains highly committed to preserving our work ethic. We are a nation of immigrants, and the values of hard work and thrift which our ancestors espoused have been cherished and inculcated from generation to generation. **This pragmatism is evidenced by parents' deep reluctance to let their children become professional athletes as the monetary prospects are still poor for career athletes in Singapore.** Further substantiation is provided even by the way Singaporeans vote in elections. Despite widespread disgruntlement with the PAP over soaring housing prices, overcrowded buses and trains and the escape of the terrorist Mas Selamat Kastari from a high-security prison, Singaporeans still voted them back into office and extended their hitherto 52-year rule because of their proven track record and the still-patchy quality of the opposition parties. With our hard-nosed pragmatism, the people are highly unlikely to demand that the government introduce overly populist policies that would seriously erode the incentive to work hard and ruin the nation economically.

**Comment [WU9]:** You may use questions to provoke critical thinking as a thesis statement (pg 53 lect notes 4) but remember never to leave it too opened ended.

However, it must be conceded that greater prosperity for every last member of society is just something that exists only in one's fantasies. There is always a trade-off between welfare and the work ethic. Hence a highly welfarist system will ultimately sap an economy of its vitality and shrink the economic pie. A close examination of the Scandinavian states makes this very apparent. Even countries like Denmark and Sweden, so fiercely proud of their cradle-to-grave welfare systems, are starting to ask serious questions about the sense and sustainability of such policies. Youth unemployment has remained stubbornly high in Sweden at over 20 percent in recent years. And hidden by the unemployment statistics are among the world's highest proportions of people on disability pensions, even though the Scandinavian countries have among the best health indicators in the world. Clearly, these legions of welfare recipients are unlikely to enjoy greater wealth due to the limited capacity of the state to increase their entitlements. Already, the citizens of Nordic countries pay some of the highest taxes in the world. In any country, there will always be people who are lazy and do not wish to work. With almost zero natural resources, Singapore can afford even less than other countries to indulge indolent individuals with over-generous welfare benefits and hence, it is not possible to achieve greater prosperity for such individuals.

**Comment [WU10]:** It is important to debunk absolute statement. Keywords in the qn include words like "all" or "every"

**Comment [WU11]:** A Comparison to Norway is a prime example because of Norway's prime economic status.



In summation, it is well within Singapore's capability to achieve greater prosperity for the great majority, but not everyone. While we are an extraordinary country that has overcome great odds, we remain subject to the same laws of economics, society and human nature as other countries. As we have developed as a country and **ascended Maslow's hierarchy**, we **have steadily aspired to attain loftier goals such as social equity and equality**. Nevertheless, we are very aware that a geographically-challenged country like ours must keep its feet on the ground and maintain that resolute pragmatism that built the foundations for our success today.

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## Adapted and edited from Karan Vijay Baswaran- 13A02A

The best government interferes least in the life of the people. Is this true?

Mark Goyder (Director of Tomorrow's Company) once said "Governance and leadership are the yin and the yang of successful organisations." The lives of citizens can be paralleled against these "successful organisations" and accordingly success will be granted in the face of government intervention. It is prudent for one to view the government as a platform for making beneficial decisions with regards to the arts, education, economy and religion rather than a hindrance. Hence, the best government will be someone who can provide the highest quality of life for its citizens and this can only be achieved through playing a towering role over the life of its citizens. While some may argue that excessive governmental control may stamp out creativity in society, their myopic perspective fails to account for the result of excessive creativity and the societal conflicts it may usher in.

In an idealistic scenario, the best government interferes minimally in the life of its people and hence nurtures the growth of the arts into its true form- as an impetus to challenge societal norms by promoting creativity. Some liberal quarters of society discern that in order for art's liberalistic nature to blossom, it must be emancipated from the grasp of government control, especially in the form of censorship. What is conventionally accepted today in society is constantly being challenged by the free and abstract nature of arts. This transcends to societal levels encouraging people to be receptive to new ideas which may step across the threshold of accepted norms. For example, when King Lear was staged in Singapore, Sir Ian McKellen was warned by the Singaporean censorship board that he could not appear onstage naked as they felt "society was not ready to handle such non- conservative approaches." This decision triggered a local outcry leading to a heated debate of censorship within Singapore. Such a reaction testifies society's receptiveness in challenging societal norms and through the aforementioned outcry censorship reforms were actually implemented.

However, this argument is over- simplistic in assuming that the life of citizens will be enriched with limited governmental control in the arts. In light of excessive liberalism in the arts sector, there has been the rise of more offensive and unorthodox art forms. This is categorised as fringe art- art which exists on the periphery and conventional definitions of art. The horrors of fringe art can be seen from Vargas "work" where he starved a dog by tying it to a pillar during an exhibition in the name of art. In such cases where art begins to inflict damage to others, it undermines its concept of being a common human endeavour and warrants government intervention; to discern what is socially acceptable and vice versa. Through the aforementioned argument, the government's role cannot be sidelined if not, the arts will merely become an unfiltered display of expressionism which could potentially offend many.

In terms of education, an overbearing governmental presence is the key to success. Education today is characteristically paid for and administered by governmental bodies. The result has been an indiscriminate extension of governmental responsibility. As of 2013, Singapore's Ministry of Education, received an impressive \$5.6 billion for public schools out of the Singaporean budget. The impressive figure demonstrates the vast extent of government funding invested in creating a developed education system. Without the government shouldering the educational financial burden, who would, on behalf of the entire country? Furthermore, a politically and economically stable



society is impossible to achieve without widespread acceptance of common values and a degree of literacy on the part of most citizens. Education contributes to both. Hence it is imperative to ensure such traits are groomed in students by making education accessible to all. Most governments worldwide ensure that compulsory education corresponds with at least with the country's minimum employment age. For example in Norway, a highly academically competent country, enforces a school leaving age at 16 while minimum employment age at 15. This ensures that at the very least, the government has educated its citizens till a secondary education- giving them basic academic fend for themselves in the economy. If there was little intervention from governments, there would be clear divisions in education and the strive for meritocracy would crumble in the face of affluence –as only the rich would be able to afford school. This could compromise the country's entire economic structure as literacy rates would fall.

Moreover, only through heavy government influence can economic success blossom. Governments must have autonomy over economic decisions in order to chart the economic path within their country via strategic decisions. An example of a successful economic strategic decision was the shift in china's economy from a centrally planned to a market economy under Deng Xiaoping. In spite of protests from some conservative factions, he pressed on with his reforms promising that economic perestroika would bestow itself upon China. His unrelenting passion for the reforms has undoubtedly led to the unprecedented growth rates of China today- making it one of the world's most prosperous economies. From the case of Deng, we can see that there are benefits in allowing the government to intervene and enforce their own input. In retrospect, without his changes, China's economy would still be very much primitive and backwards. Further, the government is also required to ensure that employment is at high levels, and that there is price stability. Additionally, a government should adjust tax rates and spending, in order to speed up economic growth rate. Evidently there is a multitude of duties associated with economic growth and only a politically sound body would be able to perform such a role without its citizens having to be concerned with the threat of malpractice or corruption. In most countries that body should be the government. In line with this argument, it can be also observed that the notion of economic power dwelling in the hands of the government is not obscure, as many thriving economies worldwide today such as Singapore and even the United States have adopted a statist economy.

In conclusion, the best government must be prepared to interfere the most in the lives of its people to ensure unconditionally that the welfare of its citizens in all respects are catered to. It is clear that many societies today still regard the government as a policy maker with great autonomy and rightly so. It is in the vision of the government to ensure the best for the country. As citizens we should not protest more governmental control if we want to desire to reap the benefits of a better quality of life. As long as the government remains pure and uncorrupted while working alongside to cater for the interests of its people we should do our best to support their agenda.

## Adapted and edited from Adrian Tan Jia Liang- 13S06B

Discuss the evolution and importance of education in the modern world.

Education is an important tool that is applied in the contemporary world to succeed, as it mitigates the challenges which are faced in life. The knowledge gained through education enables individuals' potential to be optimally utilized owing to training of the human mind. This opens doors of opportunities enables individual to achieve better prospects in career growth. Education has played a paramount role in the modern industrial world. This is attributed to the fact prospective employees must be qualified adequately to perform various tasks effectively. Industries entail resources that are sufficiently equipped with the modern technology to suit the needs and wants of the society. This thus, makes education to become a norm for services in all industrial sectors. The primary skills and the ability to apply the skills is the basis for evaluating the market.

Education trains the human mind to make the right decisions. From learning about past decisions and mistakes, we can figure out what the best path to take is in certain situations. Education helps people make the right decisions because it encourages them to be thinkers. An educated person can think of the positive and negative effects of every decision that they make and, more likely than not, they will make better decisions than an uneducated person who does not know how to reason would. All humans have some reasoning ability, but only the educated can reason and make decisions in the most efficient way. This is because their reasoning skills have been fine tuned. For example, an educated person may use his or her knowledge of science to fix a chair or to determine why their metal baseball bat is rusting. For another problem, an educated person might draw on their knowledge of English and logic to help them form an argument. For an educated person, these tasks would be very simple. But, for an uneducated person, these tasks would prove very difficult, if not impossible for some.

An uneducated person will have many difficulties in his or her life because he or she does not possess the ability to reason as well as educated people can. The training of the human mind is one of the most important values of education.

Education opens our minds to the outside world. It allows us to gain knowledge of other cultures and to learn more about our own culture. An uneducated person is shut off from the outside world. Because he or she cannot read or write, the uneducated person cannot gain wisdom or insight from books, magazines, or other mediums. Someone who is uneducated will not have knowledge of current events and will become isolated. On the other hand, an educated person will gain knowledge of the outside world and will be able to apply this knowledge to events in his or her own life. Instead of being isolated, an educated person will be opened to new ideas.

Education helps to solve many of the world's problems. It is a simple fact that countries with higher literacy rates generally have higher standards of living. Why is this so? It is because the countries with higher literacy rates have citizens who are better educated than the countries with lower literacy rates. One of the greatest sayings dealing with education is this, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This quote can be applied to education. For example, if we make small donations to troubled countries, then in reality we are really not helping them out very much. But, if we help to establish a strong education system, then the citizens will gain reasoning skills, be opened to the rest of the world, and ultimately will have a higher standard of living. Educated people can help society in many different ways. An educated people will be able to communicate ideas with each other better because they will know how to read



and write. Also, the knowledge gained from education will help everyone in their careers because they will better understand what they are doing. Furthermore, education helps society because an educated people will be able to help improve the society they currently live in by applying their knowledge to the problems that they encounter. Education is necessary to increase the economic, political, and social development of any country.

Education has played a major role in the modern life to all individuals in the society. It has enabled societies to prosper both socially and economically by enabling them to develop common culture and values. It is through education that Technological advancement has been realized enabling communication and production of cost effective products and services to the society at large.

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## Adapted and edited from Abigail Katherine Goh- 12S05L

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is the suffering of minorities a relevant phenomenon?

Kenichi Ohmae's cleverly titled book "The Borderless World" elucidates the rise of globalisation coupled with the relentless progress of technology has merged to allow for the transgression of the world's physical geographical boundaries in the 21st century. Migration rates have increased, enabling heterogeneous societies to be established all over the world. Many minority populations lament the perceived discrimination and suffering they face in societies which cater to the majority for convenience's sake. However, in the midst of their self-pity, they fail to recognize the myriad of opportunities and advantages available to them, by virtue of being the minority. Minorities do not necessarily always suffer as the onus is on them to turn their situation around and gain the upper hand.

Governments and authorities do institute policies which favour the majority simply because it is more convenient to do so. However, if the minority are able to harness their community spirit and work around the system, they are the ones who stand to benefit. In Malaysia, the Chinese make up a relatively large racial minority, constituting 15% of the population. Yet, the Malaysian government has insisted that the school curriculum be taught in Bahasa Melayu, including subjects such as Science and Mathematics. The Chinese are deprived of the opportunity to learn their native tongue, and have to grapple with a foreign language. Their community leaders recognize the value of preserving the Chinese language among future generations, and hence, set up Chinese community schools which have produced trilingual students proficient in English, Chinese and Bahasa Melayu. As a result, the Chinese have an upper hand in language skills. Now that the Malaysian government is back-pedaling on its language policy and introducing subjects taught in English, Chinese students have an advantage and are able to outshine Malay students. As such, minorities are not necessarily constrained by rigid, unfriendly policies as they prove themselves to be resourceful enough to transcend such restrictions to turn the tables on the majority.

Governments will implement policies that protect the minority, because it is the majority who will re-elect the government in democratic societies. This shortsighted concept would lead to a well-fed, complacent majority, and allow the hungry dissatisfied minority to exploit the situation and succeed. The former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir, implemented the 'bumiputra' or 'princes of the land' policy during his tenure. This policy gave Malays priority when entering universities, starting businesses, owning land and a whole host of other processes. His aim was to give the native 'princes of the land' a head-start in life, and ensure they would have a comfortable livelihood. Naturally, the implementation of this policy led to the disgruntlement of many Chinese. Meanwhile, the Malays were content and satisfied that their government would provide for them, and settled back to enjoy their blissful lives. The discrimination spurred the Chinese to work even harder than before, and gave them a strong motive to succeed. They grabbed whatever remnant opportunities the complacent Malays had passed on, and made the best of them. In present day Malaysia, it is common knowledge that the richest and most successful people are the Chinese. Dr. Mahathir himself has expressed regret at the implementation of his myopic policy, and before stepping down in 2003, slammed the Malays for their lack of hunger and desire to succeed. Therefore, for minorities, the suffering, prejudice and discrimination they face can be a form of motivation to improve their lot in society.



Although governments and societies tend to favour the majority, most want to be seen as tolerant and accepting of diversity. Nobody likes to be accused of discrimination. Minority populations could exploit this potential source of embarrassment, and manipulate government policy and societal perception to be more considerate and pliable toward them. In France, a Muslim schoolgirl was vehement in her fight to be able to wear her Muslim headscarf to school. She saw it as an expression and celebration of her faith. Muslims are a religious minority in predominantly Catholic France. Her story attracted international attention, and placed France in the glare of the media spotlight. It was revealed that while the Muslim girl was not allowed to wear her headscarf to school, practitioners of other faiths were not permitted to accessorise themselves with such open displays of their faith either. However, France was desperate to maintain an esteemed profile in the eyes of the world. Neither the French government or the French people wanted to be seen as intolerant and elitist, and the French courts finally relented and allowed the girl to wear her headscarf to school. Therefore, minority groups can leverage on the media-consciousness of most governments to secure recognition of their rights.

Minority populations can find safety in numbers by banding together to establish communities with strong bonds among members. This will lead to the forging of community spirit, and create a heartwarming enclave that gives support and strength to its members. Homosexuals are a sexual minority in the human race. They have long been discriminated against by proponents of 'family-first' movements, Bible-toting Christians, and anybody and everybody who finds their behaviour unnatural. However, in San Francisco, America, homosexuals have established their very own community, to create an environment where all its members can feel comfortable in, and engage in their activities without fear of hate crimes and discrimination. They organize Mardi Gras parties, and celebrate their diversity, providing protection and support for all its members.

Unfortunately, minorities still remain an easy target for violence and discrimination. It is easy for the majority to band together and blame the minority for a myriad of perceived crimes. This sad story has repeated itself many times in history, from the farms of the American Southwest to the ghettos and slums of Nazi Germany. Most recently, it has emerged in Singapore, when junior Minister Balaji Saladissavan blamed homosexual man for the AIDS scourge. It is sad that such discrimination and intolerance still exist, but it is likely that as society matures as a whole and accepts heterogeneity as a mark of a progressive community, minorities will not be prejudiced against and hated, but rather welcomed and celebrated.

Minorities do have a historic legacy of discrimination, and in some instances it continues to this very day. Yet, they must use their own resourcefulness, diligence and quick wit to be able to turn their situation into an advantage. The oppression and discrimination showered on them should only serve to motivate and spur them on to succeed.



## **Adapted and edited from Lim Teng Kuay- 14S06Q**

A country that fails to open its doors is setting itself up for failure.

As Tadashi Yanai, president of Fast Retailing once said "I don't believe globalisation is bad. It's criticised from a western perspective, but if you put yourself in the shoes of people in the developing world, it provides an unprecedented opportunity. Countries in the world today are largely interconnected, whether through trade relations, cultural exchanges, multinational cooperation on world issues like the environment and natural resources. These interactions among countries have built closer ties and improved the relationships of countries. The question of whether a country that fails to open its doors is setting itself up for failure is a debatable one. Opening doors can be defined as accepting foreign ideas and integrating a country into the global community, be it is economically or by culturally. Failure of a country is defined as not achieving economic, political or social stability in this essay. I would agree to a large extent, using China, North Korea and the Eastern European countries as case studies. However, using USA's and Cuba's context, the above statement may not be necessarily true.

A country that fails to open its economy and integrating itself into the global economy is likely to be setting itself up for poor economic growth. Without any economic relations with the outside world, the economic activities of that country are limited to its own territory only. An example would be China before its opening up to the world in 1978. Before 1978, China was a closed economy and there was hardly any import or export of goods and services. Inflation was rampant and the Chinese suffered economically due to mass unemployment. After opening up, the economic policies implemented by Deng Xiao Ping promoted economic activities with other countries and subsequently foreigners started to invest in China. Jobs were created and the economy became increasingly prosperous even till today. China's entry into the World Trade Organisation also allowed China's GDP to grow by double digit each year in the 21st century. The comparison between the time before China opened up and after it has integrated itself into the global economy showed us that isolation from the global economy is detrimental to a country's economic stability.

A country that fails to discuss regional issues with other countries may be setting itself up for political instability. When a country does not have the alliance and cooperation from countries to discuss issues of importance, it may be creating enemies for its own government as the country is often regarded to be irresponsible and anti-social. An example would be North Korea's refusal to go to the negotiation table for nuclear weapons. After its testing on missiles, countries such as China and USA have been persuading it to have a meeting with them to voice out their concerns and discuss plans for control of nuclear weapons. However, North Korea refused and stated that they have no obligation to do so. This issue has created tension among the countries in the region and further worsened the impression and relations North Korea has with the rest of the world. The stubbornness of North Korea to cooperate with other countries has caused its government's image and reputation to tarnish severely and it can be predicted that the government will meet challenges and pressure from the other countries regarding the legitimacy of their rule over North Korea.



A country that fails to accept new ideas into its society may risk having social instability in the long run. When a country limits the interaction of its country with other countries for vested interest, dissatisfaction and angst may spread among the people. One such example can be seen from the situation of the East European countries during the Cold War under the rule of Communism. During the Cold War, their governments restricted their citizens' communication with the democratic Western Europe in these communist states. They were not allowed access to goods from Western Europe for fear of ideological contact with democracy. The people then suffered economically due to inferior goods and most importantly, they suffered psychologically due to their desire to break out of communism. Their anger and desperation resulted in a revolt against their governments, with the fall of Berlin Wall signifying the fall of Communism in 1989. This historical event has proven that when a country fails to integrate itself with the other countries and fall back behind in terms of standard of living, it is causing tension in society to accumulate and eventually the social instability will lead to the downfall of the government.

However, it must be acknowledged that a country can be successful in some cases even when it fails to open its doors, especially in economic terms. When a country's economy is too open, the market forces of any other countries can have a significant impact on it. The example used would be USA after the financial crisis due to Lehman Brothers. USA has always been one of the most open economies in the world and has been actively trading with many countries. However, after the financial crisis, the Obama administration actually implemented protectionist measures and wanted their citizens to buy more of domestic goods to boost the economy while their trade import decreased significantly. This policy ensured that USA's economy can revive slowly but denied other countries of opportunities to gain profits by selling their goods to USA. It showed us that when a country cuts off some trade connections with the rest of the world and focus more on being self-sufficient, it can actually cause the country's economy to grow much faster in the short term. This proves that failing to open a country's doors may not necessarily mean failure for the country at all. Nonetheless, it should be recognized that USA did not fully cut off all its economic ties with the rest of the world and thus this example is not an extreme measure by the country.

Another example to show that when a country fails to open its doors, it may not be setting itself up for failure would be the Cuba's healthcare system. Cuba is a communist state and hardly has any interaction with the rest of the world. When the Obama administration and the Chinese government is still discussing over how to improve the healthcare system in their countries, Cuba has one of the best healthcare systems in the world already. All Cubans have easy access to healthcare services and do not have the problem of not being able to afford their medical fees. This proves that even if a country does not integrate itself into the global community, it is not denied of the ability to be successful in their governance and policies too. Nonetheless, it should be recognized that Cuba is a relatively small country as compared to USA or China and thus it may have been easier for Cuba to succeed in its healthcare reforms. Besides, we do know of Cuba's other domestic problems such as poor economic growth which does not showcase that Cuba is a successful country as a whole.

In the world today, it is quite impossible for countries to not come together as one and solve issues of importance. I believe that a country that fails to open its doors will most likely to set itself up for failure in the future. Even though there may be cases which prove

otherwise, given the technological advancement and the rapid population growth, the policies may fail to counter these changes and be increasingly of no use if they remain static.

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