**GP Essays on Reflective Issues**

1. What is a reflective essay?

It reflects an opinion about an issue in life

1. What makes a good reflective essay?

Opinionated, expressive, logical and dimensional in discussion

3) How to approach and write a reflective essay?

1. rephrase the meaning of the quote or phrase
2. set perspectives / proposition (EOA)
3. set categories
4. identify the nature of discussion – DYA?
5. conceptualized idea
6. paragraph development – topic sentence, elaboration, examples, concluding sentence
7. types of paragraph – opposing view, rebuttal and supporting view – depends on the type of question

**GCE A Level 2016**

1) Is competition always desirable?

2) ‘Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone’s opinion is of equal value.’ What is your view?

**GCE A level 2015**

3. ‘No cause is worth dying for.’ Discuss.

No belief, purpose, a pursuit in life is worth sacrificing for.

**GCE A level 2014**

4. 'Getting what one wants in life is what matters.' Discuss.

To achieve what one aspires for in life is the most important in life.

**List of Questions for Discussion and Practice**

**Essay Question 1**

‘Live as if you were to die tomorrow.’ Is this good advice?

**Essay Question 2**

Kindness cannot be legislated.’ What is your view?

**Essay Question 3**

‘Promises should never be broken.’ What is your view?

**Essay Question 4**

Is there any value in suffering for a cause?

Failure is an option. Discuss.

**Essay Question 1**

**‘Live as if you were to die tomorrow.’ Is this good advice?**

Question Analysis

* DYA question
* In fact, the full quote by Mahatma Gandhi is as follows:
  + ‘Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.’
* This statement means that you should live everyday as if it were your last.
* ‘Good advice’ - to consider whether such a view is valuable and meaningful to individuals, in terms of their personal development, the way we conduct our lives and how the society will work

Introduction

**Overview:** In modern societies, individuals have set their sights on various goals to find meaning in their lives. The probability of success hinges on the motivation level and capabilities of the individuals.

* Relate it to the notion on how time is utilized

**Given View:** Some support the advice to ‘live as if you were to die tomorrow’, which implies that everyone should live their lives to the fullest all the time.

**Contrasting View:** On the other hand, some challenge this view as they argue that such a perception may encourage reckless behaviour that compromises on their own and others’ lives.

**Stand:** In view of these differing perspectives, this essay is more inclined to the view that the statement is good advice for all, given that many people lack the will and determination to persevere.

Main Body

**Opposing View: Explain why the given statement is not good advice - Personal Development**

**TS:** For those who believe that the statement is not good advice, their rationale stems from the perception that the heightened awareness of the limited time we have encourages reckless behaviour that results in negative social implications.

**EL**: Should an individual be presented with such a worrying thought, he or she may be pressured to think that there is little time left to achieve personal aims and pursuits in life. As such, the individual will lose focus on the pertinent aspects of life, particularly the intrinsic benefits.

**EG:** Social issues that emerged due to this negative mentality

* ‘You only live once’ (YOLO) mentality
* Drug-related offences committed by youths who are curious but misled social vices

**LS:** As such, this advice is not appropriate for some people as the reckless behaviours adopted in relation to this advice may lead to degradation of the individual.

**Rebuttal: Explain why the given statement is good advice - with respect to the given view in the preceding paragraph - Personal Development**

**TS:** However, such a view is myopic as the social behaviour of individuals is shaped by their own mindsets, which can promote a sense of optimism or pessimism towards life.

**EL:** If the individual holds a negative view towards life’s challenges, the given statement is likely to be interpreted as a harsh realization that our time on Earth is limited, such that it is pointless to have meaningful pursuits. In contrast, an optimistic individual will interpret the statement in the sense that our finite lifespan stresses the importance of giving our best for every waking moment. Therefore, it can be observed that the ‘goodness’ in the advice depends on the mindsets of individuals.

**EG:** Accepting ‘YOLO’ mentality is correct/acceptable → defines a sense of impetus to seek for achievements and experiences

**LS: However, such an advice would be beneficial if the person knows how to react and conduct himself in an ethical and proper way.**

**Supporting View 1: Explain why the statement is good advice - shapes one to be less trivialised and mediocre**

**TS:** The statement is good advice as the notion of making each second count serves as a strong impetus for individuals to be more concerned about the more significant issues in life.

**EL:** The statement implies that we should let go of the trivial matters and prioritise our time on pressing concerns. We have less time to be petty on these mediocre matters.

**EG:**

* Trivial matters - materialistic pursuits (wealth), fame and glory
* More important things in life - racial divisions, environmental degradation, poverty

**LS:**

**Supporting View 2: Explain why the statement is good advice - serves as a source of encouragement and motivation for people to work for the betterment of societies.**

**TS:** This statement is sound and beneficial to Mankind as it acts as a motivation source, where people hold a cautionary attitude towards the future and are encouraged to improve the development of societies.

**EL:** By recognising the limited time that we all have, we are encouraged to leave behind legacies that benefit future generations. These economic contributions are defined by the ever-changing desire for improvements, which has been the core mentality that guided the modernization and industrialization processes, thus explaining the economic prosperity that we now see.

**EG:**

* To promote economic development through innovation and creative improvements
* Cultural preservation
* Rise of social movements

**Supporting View 3: Explain why the statement is good advice - promotes resource maximization to promote more efficient utilization of resources**

**TS:** The statement is good advice for modern societies as it promotes resource maximization and efficient utilization of resources.

**EL:**

* By knowing the limitations of resources and time, we will strive to achieve the best possible outcome, with the given resources that we possess.
* We understand the constraints of our fragile lives and the significance of making full use of what we have to raise the welfare for ourselves.

**EG:**

* Economists have derived the concept of ‘scarcity’ and this notion helps individuals and governments to understand this principle and make informed decisions

**LS:**

Conclusion

**Essay Question 2**

**Kindness cannot be legislated.’ What is your view?**

Question Analysis

* DYA question
* ‘Kindness’ - Being generous, kind and considerate towards others
* ‘Legislated’ - Pass laws

Introduction

**Overview:** Kindness is an ethical behaviour that individuals are encouraged to develop from their early stages in life. Kindness implies that one should be generous, kind and considerate towards others.

**Given View:** Given the societal benefits of kindness, governments find that citizens should inculcate kindness in their way of life. Some believe that governments should legislate kindness as part of the desirable behaviours that society should embrace.

**Contrasting View:** However, others may view such a move as controversial and imposing as a value and even more as a law.

**Stand:** In view of these differing perspectives, this essay is more inclined to the view that kindness cannot and should not be legislated, given its complexity and complications.

Main Body

**Opposing View: Explain why kindness can be legislated - social gains**

**TS:** Some argue that kindness can be legislated as society view it as a core value to guide the society.

**EL:**

* [Show why governments should legislate kindness] Society acknowledges the importance and significance of kindness as a core value because of the benefits
  + Kindness can promote civic-mindedness in the society
  + Fosters social cohesion
* [Show how it is legislated] Depends on the government’s capacity to encrypt kindness into the law
  + The people’s degree of acceptance
  + Beliefs of the lawmakers

**EG:**

* The Singapore Government finds that they should always strive to be kind and gracious towards one another, so as to foster cooperation. For example, the political parties must first embrace this idea and society must be willing to accept it.
* Jean-Jacques Rousseau - ‘will of all’

**LS:**

**Rebuttal: Explain why kindness cannot be legislated - complex process**

**TS:** However, such an indoctrination is not simple as it is a complicated process to introduce such a moral law.

**EL:** Governments should not take on a paternalistic role to decide how societies should behave because they may not understand the repercussions and implications.

If kindness is misplaced on the deceptive individuals who bear malicious intentions, victims may become disillusioned with the need to advocate kindness. Also, some may take the kindness of others for granted, which will cultivate a society of dependency.

**EG:**

* Reported cases of individuals who exploited kindness by living off charities and donations to sustain themselves.
* Similarly, charity organizations, like NKF, exploited the goodwill of
* people, seen in terms of the misappropriation of funds.

**LS:**

**Supporting View 1: Explain why kindness cannot be legislated - moral yardsticks**

**TS:** Governments are unable to set the yardsticks for kindness as it involves many determinants that define kindness, such that lawmakers encounter difficulties in achieving mutual consensus.

**EL:** Different societies and ethnic groups have varied ways on how kindness is perceived. The way these groups view social relationships differs as well. Consequently, the yardstick for kindness may create impositions on societies that have limited impacts.

**EG:** For example, the academic curriculum for moral education in China has omitted kindness as a school requirement, given that kidnappers have exploited the kindness of the naive and ignorant to prey on them.

**LS:**

**Supporting View 2: Explain why kindness cannot be legislated**

[Cultural and religious standpoint]

**TS:** Religious and cultural influences bear the moral authority to guide individuals on the correct path and instil positive mindsets and behaviours.

**EL:** The governments are not in the position to impose on citizens to cultivate kindness as a desirable behaviour. On the other hand, cultural and religious institutions serve as the moral compass to guide individuals to behave in civilised and responsible ways. Behaviour of individuals cannot be defined by laws. Instead, social behaviours are shaped by cultural and religious norms.

**EG:**

* Religious teachings, like Islam, promote a way of life, which prevents rigid indoctrination that people might reject. This complexity challenges the mindsets and behaviours of the modern and traditional Muslims. Therefore, the governments should delegate this important responsibility of promoting kindness to religious and cultural organizations.

**LS:**

**Supporting View 3: Explain why kindness cannot be legislated**

[Educational perspective]

Given the complexity of this issue, kindness cannot be legislated to impose on individuals to develop such an ethical behaviour. Instead, governments should take on an alternative approach that involves the use of education as the means to cultivate, rather than institutionalise, kindness.

**TS:**

**EL:** The cultivation of kindness involves the development of a positive mindset and desirable social behaviours. Therefore, education is more effective than legislation in shaping mindsets to instil acceptance willingly rather than forcefully.

**EG:** For example, the Singapore Kindness Movement was introduced via the proliferation of education as a suitable means, compared to legislation as an institutional method. The government recognised the advantage and feasibility of using education.

**LS:**

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay reasserts the view that kindness cannot be legislated as the process is complex and difficult to implement. Furthermore, governments do not have the moral authority to impose on the mindsets and behaviours of people, given the differing yardsticks of individuals. Therefore, governments should relinquish this responsibility to religious and cultural organizations, which are more effective and credible in cultivating kindness.

**Question**

**Failure is an option. Discuss.**

The road to success is never an easy path as we are likely to experience failures. Though the taste of success is sweet, the experience of failure is tough to bite. As such, this has led to the conventional thinking that failure is not an option. However, there are moments in life we have to take the other view that failure is an option we can have as life is not always rosy and eventful for us to be successful all times, devoid of failures. In view of these polarizing perspectives, this essay is more inclined to the view that failure is an option we can have as there are benefits of this choice.

Main body

Most individuals see failure not as an option because they over-rated the consequences they will experience when they fail in achieving what they set out to do life like the pursuit of academic success.

However, this view is simply too myopic and narrow-minded as the consequences of failure can be savaged over time, dealt with proper recuperation and review.

Failure is an option when we have a determined mindset to attempt again to achieve what we want in life.

We can accept failure if we are able to learn from why we have failed to make us better in our next attempt.

Failure will be a wise option if there are avenues for us to recuperate from the failures, dampening the detrimental consequences.

Conclusion

We see failures as terrifying consequences that will undermine our lives when we embark in our journey of life. The pains, the disappointments and the losses are unbearable and logically shape us to think that failure is not an option. However, if we can make the society and the members of it create a safety net that will cushion failure, we can see failure to be less frightening and devastating to accept failures and make us more prepared for success.