

SASS MYE 2016 4E5N Paper 1

Sample Essays

1. **Describe** a precious memory that matters most to you and **explain** why you will always cherish it.

Each time I hear the word ‘precious’, the **sequence of events** on that glorious day – 24th November 2012 – immediately rushes to the front of my mind. It was a dreaded day for most of my friends – including me, initially of course – before the life-changing string of events **transpired**. We were collecting our life-defining Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) results on that day.

The day before, I could really feel all the **butterflies in my stomach fluttering** in all directions. “This can only go two ways: I could fall on my knees at the sight of my results and look up to God with **despondence**,” I calmed myself before going to bed, “or I could jump up in the air with relief and ecstasy.” To prepare for PSLE, I had done everything imaginable: burning the midnight oil for revision; attending an **avalanche** of tuition classes; and sacrificing watching my beloved Chelsea battle for the premiership title on TV. The latter was actually an act I would classify as “against the law” – my law on being faithful to my passion.

On the day itself, I put on my **one-size-too-small** and **battle scarred** school uniform for one last time. To be honest, I felt like a **war veteran**, just that I had yet to find out if I had won the all-important war. After saying my final prayer, my parents – no less worried than I – accompanied me to school.

In school, my classmates and I were too nervous to speak and we just sat on the floor, eagerly awaiting the release of our results. Some of us were shivering; others were forcing a smile or two unsuccessfully. **Ironically**, we **resembled a firing line** waiting to be shot dead by our form teacher. The **impending judgment minutes** came. We got up, struggling as our **jelly-legs** could not quite measure up to the **immensity of the daunting situation**. One by one my classmates **drooped and slouched** after receiving their results. I could only hear my heart beating like a gigantic drum as my body temperature surged to 1000 degrees or so.

The next thing I knew was my mother frantically chasing after me with my result slip in her hands as I was too dazed to look at my results. Strangely, I saw her taking something out of her pocket. Feeling **agitated** as the suspense was crumbling me, somehow her widest grin had the power to **exterminate my anxiety** and stress straightaway. The words that emanated from her mouth were laced with honey: “Son, congrats! It’s straight A’s!”

I immediately got down on my knees and thanked God. All the **excruciating** hard work for the **gruelling** examination had been well rewarded. What came next was a total shocker. Mother handed me two tickets – an airplane ticket for a trip to London and an FA Cup Final match ticket starring Chelsea! I was so **deliriously** over the moon but fortunately I did not suffocate my mother with my **hugest hug**.

Well, I never knew breaking the law could reap such great rewards.

(506 words)

2. 'Much can be learnt from watching movies.' What are your views?

"The way I see it, you can run from the past or you can face up to it," Mandrill dishes out this sage wisdom to Simba in the Disney classic 'The Lion King'. Many people dismiss movies as merely **ostentatious drivel** designed to please the eye. After all, what good could possibly come of observing fictional characters **caper across hypothetical landscapes** on missions so surreal they make modern art look like a textbook encyclopaedia? However, avid **cinema aficionados** **advocate** that movies often impart invaluable lessons or values like the one from Mandrill.

Firstly, it is possible to learn from a movie via the ideas it presents and the morals it **bestows**. Male audiences across the globe **gasp(ed) in horror** as Darth Vader was revealed to be Luke Skywalker's father in 'Star Wars'; thousands of children shared Simba's tears as Mufasa was sent hurtling to his death in 'The Lion King'; and millions of ladies felt the **wrenching** pain of their hearts sinking with Jack and Rose in 'Titanic'. These fictional characters are but **figments** of their writers' imagination; however, the emotions they evoke, the ideologies they represent, the **plethora** of observations, beliefs and interpretations that they comprise all come alive via the **reel world**. Audiences get sucked into their world and be **enthralled** in the wide spectrum of rich learning journeys of life that are otherwise not obtainable in the **humdrum** of daily life.

Next, the idealism portrayed in many movies can inspire audiences to pursue excellence. Critics often feel offended by the shining examples of excellence portrayed in the **multitude** of environments and characters and say they cannot be **replicated** in real life. However, I feel that these critics are being narrow minded. 'Rocky' is not about being a muscular, good-looking and perfect boxer. It is about striving to be the best at what you can do. 'Captain America' is not about dressing up in cosplay to beat up some bad guys; it is about never giving up, regardless of the circumstances. As such, if we are open minded, we can sieve out such gems of knowledge from the **visual feast on the big screen**.

Lastly, movies teach us to empathise with someone. With all **tangential** personas, backgrounds, tastes and philosophies present in two different beings, we cannot really expect one person to actually be able to comprehend how the cogs turn in the other person's mind. With movies, such **windows of opportunity** exist as we get to walk a mile in someone else's shoes – via the good old camera tricks of seeing things from the character's point of view. In 'Schindler's List', we get into the Liam Neeson's noble character's head as he makes decisions to save the Jews from the approaching Nazis. Hence watching such a film teaches us to have a broader view on life and a greater acceptance of our fellow man.

To conclude, movies are giving us answers to all the questions life asks of us. We just need to open our eyes, listen, feel and learn. Get ready the popcorn.

(507 words)

3. 'Life today is more stressful than before.' Write about some occasions when you have found this to be true.

The 21st century has seen a rapid rise in technological developments that have made the world shrink and people busier than ever. Today, we have immigrants moving into global cities like Singapore in large numbers and this adds to the stress of living in this **tiny red dot**.

"Boy, we have to go now! It's 7.05! " My mother's **scream pierced** through the door. Clenching a piece of bread between my teeth, I **bolted** out of the house to meet my awaiting parents who kept tapping on their watches. This is an every morning scene in my home, in the never-ending race to reach school before the **traffic builds up to a crawl** just outside on the main road. For me, it is a constant battle to wake up on time after burning the midnight oil to complete all my homework. For my parents, it is a battle for them to ensure they are not caught in the traffic jam that would render them late for work.

"Boy, put down the phone!" commanded my father as he came home one night. "We need to talk..." Luckily it was not something as serious as I thought. But it struck me that the fast-paced society that we live in now has contributed to an increase in stress. The **ubiquitous** smart phones have been engineered to almost perfection. Such rapid developments brought us more stress – we become more withdrawn from the crowd. During the peak hour at a typical train interchange, we can see waves of people rushing up and down the groaning escalators, rushing to squeeze into the trains that wheeze by every two minutes – nothing more, nothing less. Everyone will be staring down at their mobile phones, oblivious of their surroundings. Our society has moved so rapidly that there is frankly no time for chit-chat anymore. I am guilty of that as well.

"Boy, Singapore now has many immigrants who are hungry for success, you must make sure you are on top of them, ok?" Such wise advice from my grandmother at the last Chinese New Year only adds more pressure to my already stressful situations. As I am taking my O level this year, I always get "reminded" by my well-meaning parents and relatives to work with "enough diligence" and to attain "good grades" lest the top places in junior colleges get taken away by the "hungry pack". Singapore has attracted many smart and hardworking students from China, India and South East Asia who are definitely adding "spurs to our hides", to borrow the wise words of our late founding Prime Minister. We students constantly fear a **bleak future** that awaits us if we do not have the grades to get that **cushy job** that would sustain and support our family in future.

It does look like the stress we face today will only get worse tomorrow. We just have to **bite the bullet** and "press on with all our might", like a line in my school song suggests. Let's hit the books!

(503 words)

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4. 'Internet shopping is fast and convenient.' What, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages of buying things online?

"Technology gives us power, but it does not and cannot tell us how to use that power," so claims Jonathan Sacks, a British rabbi and religious scholar-philosopher. Thanks to the Internet, the power of online shopping lies in our hands. With just a mouse click, the world's most desirable items can be had with ease and online transactions eliminate errors found in human-to-human transactions. However, the Internet is also a **hunting ground** for scammers and Internet shopping can badly affect the human body if we do not know how to use it properly.

Firstly, Internet shopping is very efficient. In the past, whenever there was a sale, people would flock to the store, jostle with the noisy crowds, join the **scrimmage** and face the danger of being **trampled to death**. They might not even get the desired items despite the trouble. Today, shoppers just have to visit an online store, add whatever they want into a 'cart', press on the 'Purchase' button and it is done. To convert hours of decision-making and queuing into mere minutes, and the frantic jostling to just sipping coffee in the comforts of home, now that is something worthy of a praise.

Next, with online transactions, calculation error is absent. In the **brick and mortar shops**, cashiers may at times make mistakes as they cannot cope with the pressure of frantic buying taking place. This may result in loss of money or a huge fit by a frustrated customer. With online shopping, as it is computers counting the items' prices, GST, shipping charges and tax rebates, there is less likelihood of a calculation error. Also, customers can take their own time to ensure everything is accounted for before proceeding with online electronic payment.

However, Internet shopping is **rife with scams**. Some shady merchants often post items at ridiculously low prices to **ensnare unsuspecting shoppers**. Once the purchase is made, the seller would delete the account, hide behind the anonymity offered by the Internet, and remain uncontactable. Unfortunately, the lack of face-to-face interaction afforded by the Internet can be exploited to cause harm to naïve shoppers.

Moreover, adopting to Internet shopping can be unhealthy. As online shopping can be done from home, people will lose their only form of exercise – walking in the malls to look for the best bargains. The time saved from shopping online will also be used to sit around the house and not for socialising or exercising. As a result, this **sedentary lifestyle** will cause the online shoppers to be lazy, fat and prone to diseases and illnesses. Hence, Internet shopping can be disadvantageous to people as it robs them of their only form of genuine physical activity beneficial to their health.

In conclusion, Internet shopping is a **double edged sword** that could lead to moments of joy or depression, depending on the shopper's actions. The Spiderman quote -- "With great power comes great responsibility" -- has never been more apt. Shop online, but with care.

(494 words)

“Internet shopping is fast and convenient.” What, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages of buying things online?

It would be the norm just ten years ago -- the mention of Amazon and Ali Baba would be a conversation regarding rainforests and an Arabian tale. Today, everyone can associate the two names to the biggest online merchants in the world, with sales in the billions per year. Just what is the attraction of Internet shopping?

Firstly, shopping online is convenient. Fingers, rather than legs have taken over the task of shopping, allowing people to save themselves a trip to the mall – an hour long drive for people in big countries. In Singapore, online shopping has opened up the vast market places in the United States and China, and many goods -- once only available if you travel to those countries -- are now readily available.

Next, online shopping can surprisingly be cheaper. This is because online merchants do not need shop fronts, and instead store their goods in large warehouses. They also save up on having store personnel, and man hours spent on arranging shelves and store displays. This saving is then passed on to the customer. Merchants like Ali Baba also allow a shopper to connect directly with the manufacturer, thus avoiding the costs of the distributor in the transaction. This all results in goods being sold at lower prices than in shops.

Lastly, shopping online has also been boosted by the accompanying boom to the transportation industry, specifically the couriers who deliver the goods to the buyer. Shipping via air and sea have increased in scope and efficiency, and land couriers in most advanced countries can deliver goods within a day. This has led to a decrease in the waiting time of goods and made online shopping even more appealing.

On the flip side, online shopping is not without its disadvantages. As all the consumers see are the goods displayed on the computer screen, it could lead to consumers buying goods which might not be what they envisioned in the first place. A common problem would be buying shoes online. There is no guarantee that they would arrive in the right size for the buyer, given that sizes vary across continents. Another problem would be the proverbial “we are trying to locate your shipment” headache. Couriers might be efficient, but that does not prevent them from losing a small percentage of their shipments. A one per cent loss of their packages might be acceptable to an industry, but not when your package is within the unfortunate one per cent.

The sheer size of Internet shopping in terms of volume and monetary terms means that more and more merchants would use the platform as a means to sell their wares. With the continuing growth of this industry, many disadvantages would be addressed by the merchants. Amazon, for example, is already trying to use drones to deliver their packages in order to increase their efficiency in getting the parcels to their customers. Soon, more people will be attracted to shop online. And this is one idea that the merchants do not need to sell.

(506 words)

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