



General Paper Bulletin 2022 (JC 1)

Dear TMJC students, welcome to the year-end issue of TMJC's GP Bulletin for 2022. We bring you yet another selection of the essays written by your schoolmates during the recent Year-End Examination. Thanks to the students who have contributed their essays.

While these essays are not perfect or model essays, there is a lot of merit in them, and they are clear evidence that good quality writing is possible under exam conditions.

While reading these essays, you may find some of the content useful for application to other questions; do be judicious in using such information in a manner that is relevant to the question you are answering.

Lastly, you should not attempt to copy and hand them in as your own.

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Q1: 'Too much emphasis is placed on physical appearance in today's world.' Is this a fair comment?

Sample Essay	Marker's Comments
Since the dawn of time, physical appearances have always been emphasised heavily. Physical appearances would refer to one's outward appearance, in terms of physical features and clothing choices. It is irrefutable that the importance of physical appearances is largely due to the fact that humans, of course, are social creatures, and outward appearances are what allows one to forge and maintain good relations. In recent times, arguments have been brewing, stating that "too much emphasis" is placed on physical appearances, with the increasing popularity of various dietary choices, changing of fashion choices as well as the promotion of many other products that focus solely on improving one's outward appearances. I am inclined to believe that this is true of today's world, in spite of the various arguments against this.	Clear Stand: A clear stand is stated, together with the accompanying preview of points. Contextualisation: Context of today's world is tackled with clear sign posts like "in recent times" and "with the increasing popularity". Suggestions for Improvement: Could have started with a hook/an example of a celebrity or influencer who is popular due to his or her physical appearance to make it more interesting.
Dietary choices of today's world have evolved drastically due to the increased emphasis. Good dietary choices and food intake are most certainly paramount in ensuring physical wellbeing. This statement I wholly believe in. However, today's world has painted a false and seemingly unreachable image of what a "healthy" body looks like, be it slim waists, thigh gaps or an unnaturally fatless stomach. This image although idealistic and unrealistic, is still what many would pursue, such that they experiment with various questionable dietary options that may not be suitable for them, leading to a multitude of health implications. For instance, there was a vastly spread "diet" that was supposed to ensure weight loss by creating the illusion of "fullness". This diet consisted of taking a cotton ball, dipping it in orange juice and finally, consuming it. However, this could lead to intestinal blockages and was most certainly insufficient in meeting one's daily caloric intake. Hence, I agree that too much emphasis is placed on physical appearances, as made clear by the increasing frequency of extreme diets.	Quality of Topic Sentences: The topic sentence is quite clear despite not being the starting sentence. Understanding of POC: The POC is addressed, as seen in how negative the impacts are when people adopt these diets. Relevance of Examples: The example is valid and fairly well elaborated though it could be better if the actual name of the diet was provided and the source of the subsequent medical research findings cited. Contextualisation: There is clear contextualisation with the signpost "today's world". Suggestions for Improvement: See above on "Relevance of examples".
Fashion trends are also drastically changing, in terms of clothing and physical features. The concept of perfection in physical appearances is ever-changing, this is due to varying public opinions and differences in the viewing of "perfection". As such, trends are varying from day to day. There are of course people who attempt to keep up with these rapidly evolving trends, splurging money to purchase the latest designer fashion or even on procedures to further enhance their looks. This unsustainable spending can cause an ordinary person huge financial burden if one is not careful. For instance, the "Korean Wave" hit the world on an immense scale, promoting Korean fashion and even physical features, placing them on a glorified pedestal, causing millions to dump their money into buying these clothing and even go under the knife to appear "more Korean". One example would be Oli London, who was initially a generic man from the United Kingdom. After being influenced by this wave, he proceeded to splurge thousands of dollars undergoing surgeries and procedures, as well as purchasing Korean fashion items. In spite of him being able to financially supply himself, he claimed that he never felt happy and satisfied with himself, after chasing the "depiction of perfection" for so long. Hence, I agree that there has been too much emphasis placed on outward appearances, such that many spend	Quality of Topic Sentences: A rather vague topic sentence as it is not clear how fashion trends affect physical features. Understanding of POC: Again, the POC is addressed through the depiction of how money is spent in an unsustainable way in order to keep up with these trends. Relevance of Examples: More details could be given on what exactly this "Korean Wave" entails in terms of fashion. Also, the example of Oli London sounds rather extreme and isolated. Contextualisation: There is a link to the current context though it needs to be justified/explained why such trends change so rapidly.

unsustainably in the pursuit of an ever-changing trend that leaves them unsatisfied and depressed in the end.	Suggestions for Improvement: Perhaps more could be said on the mental and emotional impacts of the failure to look good despite following these trends.
The heavy emphasis on physical appearances is also present in the vast field of jobs and opportunities. It is so prevalent that physical appearances have become even more vital in terms of securing a financially-stable source of income, as often times interviewers tend to seek out the more attractive and presentable people, though they may be devoid of the skills required for the job. This causes those who are truly skilled to falter and fall behind in society, solely because of their unappealing physical appearance. Hence, I agree that too much emphasis is placed on one's physical appearance today, as even appearances can be a key determinant in deciding the fate of an individual in the jobs and opportunities sector.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Clearly stated at the beginning. Understanding of POC: Though addressed, it needs to be made clearer why companies hire more physically attractive people. Relevance of Examples: A general and hypothetical example. Contextualisation: Is the hiring based on looks prevalent throughout all industries or sectors? This needs to be made clear and justified. Suggestions for Improvement: Provide a concrete example of the industries or sectors which hire based on looks.
Critics of my view may say that emphasis on one self's physical appearance is "self-care". Being heavily concerned with one's outward appearance is mainly to bring about personal benefits such as improved health and also boost self-confidence, leading them to suggest that heavy emphasis on one's physical appearance is completely normal. For instance, skincare is an aspect of maintaining one's physical appearance. Many purchase products to assist in their skin's health. This ultimately gives rise to healthier skin and improved appearances, leading to a boost in self-confidence. Hence, they argue that there is not too much emphasis placed on physical appearances as it brings about personal benefits. However, I find their argument flawed. Being heavily obsessed and placing heavy emphasis on one's physical appearance may be seen as tying one's self-worth to external appearances. This is of course, unhealthy to say the least, as one may beat oneself up if one does not meet one's ideal physical appearance, causing one to spiral downwards into the vortex of self-deprecation and low self-esteem. Hence, I argue that there is still too much emphasis placed on physical appearances today as many tie their self-worth to their physical appearances.	Quality of Topic Sentences: A valid point though "not too much" could have been written to clearly address the question. Understanding of POC: POC is clearly addressed, with the OV explaining the benefits of skincare while the R countering that it could lower one's self worth. Relevance of Examples: An example could have been provided for the rebuttal. Perhaps look at statistics or trends. Contextualisation: The link to today's world is not clear. Need to look at why this whole skincare phenomenon is happening. Suggestions for Improvement: See above comments on examples and contextualisation.
In a nutshell, the world around us is ever-changing and so are the trends they follow. With the increased frequency of extreme dieting and varying fashion trends, one may find oneself struggling to keep up with them, and feel emotions of incompetence and dissatisfaction. Hence, one should not tie one's self-worth by heavily emphasising on physical appearances, but instead live one's life without following trends blindly like a sheep.	Instead of summarising some of the points mentioned, perhaps more could be said about the need and maybe even ways to counter some of these unhealthy trends.

Hence, I agree that too much emphasis is placed on physical appearances today.	
Marker's Overall Comment: Content + Convincing arguments raised, some of which are quite well explained. +/- Some points lack concrete examples or elaboration of the examples. Language + Fluency noted. + Some evidence of complexity, with clear signposting. Tan Qing En Aden 22S503	

Q4: To what extent does social media shape the way we see the world?

Sample Essay	Marker's Comments
Social media has unquestionably become the defining trait of our generation. Everywhere one goes, one is bombarded with screens full of applications that keep you engaged with a fervour and unflinching grip of unprecedented volumes. The chokehold social media has on our minds is something of much debate, where most do not recognise the way it changes our perception and alludes us from reality. Some might say that social media does not shape the way we see the world to a large extent, as our perception of the world is more dependent on our parents and upbringing and largely our own discretion. However, I argue that social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent as it changes our perception of body image, is our main forum and source of current events, and is inherently designed to manipulate our cognitive biases to the world around us.	Clear Stand: Clear stand arrived at, supported by summary of supporting points of argument. Understanding of POC: Mindset or the way we see the world is attempted and addressed fully. Contextualisation: The question requires examination about the present/ongoing context and this is evident here, especially grounded by the use of present/present ongoing tense.
Firstly, social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent in the way it changes our perception of body image. As an entire generation of children move into a technologically advanced world, a smartphone has become an integral part of their lives. With this smartphone comes the luxury of social media, where one can connect, share and create at a larger scale than ever before. Nowadays, applications such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are means for people to share their lives. However, what most people fail to recognise is the perfect illusion that is being painted on the screen. For many teenagers, especially young girls, the influx of Instagram models and celebrities feeds deep roots and implants a specific, desired body type. Seeing the thin waists, large breasts and full lips show up on their feed result in them comparing themselves to an idealised beauty standard. When they do not match up to such beauty standards, they feel inadequate, resorting to cosmetic surgery or even self-harm to cope with their perceived inadequacies. In a study done by Stanford University, it was shown that only 5 per cent of women around the world looked like the ideal thin and symmetrically aligned body type. This highlights just how skewed the perceptions of young children are today, where the insignificant minority is idealised as opposed to the perfectly normal 95 per cent. Moreover, a study done by Tristan Harris, former ethicist of the Google Company, showed that the suicide rates in American teenage girls from the age of 12 to 14 increased by 153 per cent in 2011, just when the influx of social media began. This shows starkly how social media changed the entire trajectory of body image and perceived ideals	Quality of Topic Sentences: Relevant but must avoid inclusion of specifics or examples (body image). Understanding of POC: The POC is clearly addressed, with the SV showing the ubiquity and impact of social media as factors of mindset change. Relevance of Examples: Good correlation between advent of social media and suicide within a certain impressionable demographic, using impactful statistics. Contextualisation: This is attempted effectively, signposted by "nowadays" and "2011" among others. Suggestions for Improvement: Incorporate key phrase "where one can connect, share and create on a larger scale than ever before" into topic sentence. Do include discussion of the role of social media, and also increase the scope of

in our younger generations of today, completely skewing the way they see themselves and the world around them. Instead of feeling accepted and seeing the world as a place to belong, they now see the world as a place they must fit into in a specific way to be accepted. Therefore, I stand by the argument that social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent.	discussion, not merely focussing on celebrities.
Secondly, social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent as it has become the main source of news and information for billions around the world. Back before social media applications were introduced, people relied on a very small number of outlets to receive information. Television news, radios and newspapers were the main means of finding and discovering the happenings of the world. Now, social media provides the information at the tip of one's fingers, where the extensiveness and haste with which news is dissipated is alarmingly high. Multiple news sites, posts and channels keep people updated and aware of the world around them, and this becomes the view with which one can perceive the world. The information that one receives on their feed is what determines their take on matters such as uprisings, wars, politics and numerous other topics. This can be seen in the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020. In the police brutality and murder of George Floyd, there was an outrage sparked across the country of America to defend and stand up for the people of African descent and the extensive discrimination against them. If not for social media, and the viral hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, people around the world would not have been aware or even recognised the severity of the situation, brooding in an ignorance that led them to believe that all is well with the world. This movement exacerbated and amplified by social media changed the way people around the world viewed discrimination, allowing them to sympathise and stand in solidarity against the marginalised. The impact social media had on bringing about such a big social change highlights how distinct and relevant social media is in informing and manipulating our perception of the world. Other movements that have brought about such social change and change in the way people see the world include the #MeToo movement on sexual harassment, #StopAsianHate movement in light of discrimination against Eastern Asians during the pandemic and numerous others. As the news outlet for 4 billion people, social media has increased the speed of awareness and accelerated the change in mindset world events can bring about. Therefore, I reiterate that social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent.	Quality of Topic Sentences: A clear topic sentence to start the paragraph. Understanding of POC: Effective and addresses extent of social media's impact, with apt elaboration. Relevance of Examples: Current, well known globally and relevant. Contextualisation: As above (see examples). Suggestions for Improvement: Perhaps more could be said about why – the nature of social media – is able to have such a huge and wide impact globally.
Some might say that social media does not shape the way we see the world to a large extent as it is our generational figures and upbringing that shapes our world view largely. For many impressionable young children, our behaviours, mannerisms and opinions stem from the people we grew up around. The influence our parents or grandparents have on the way we see the world is significant, where the morals and beliefs instilled by them are what shape our character and choices. They believe this to be the case as they are under the impression that children of this generation look to their culture, upbringing and elders to formulate their views. This can be seen in our own Singaporean society, where children are taught both at home and in school about the importance of values and specific world views. One example of this is Character and Citizenship Education in primary, secondary and tertiary education put in place by the Ministry of Education in which students learn the correct way to behave, and perceive the world with an apt moral conduct. The lessons centre around how one should practise discretion and shape their world views to align with that of the standardised moral compass. This highlights how the influence of the surrounding environment in a	Quality of Topic Sentences: Effective opposing view, signposted by "some might say". Understanding of POC: Sound discussion of alternative causal factor leading to mindset change. Relevance of Examples: Incorporate other examples, besides those regarding school. Contextualisation: Sound. Suggestions for Improvement: Increase range of examples used to increase scope of discussion. Also, the focus should be on why social media does not shape the way we see the world, and focus less on other factors.

person's upbringing is what shapes the way they see the world, where they are taught and guided by those around them.	
However, I disagree that upbringing shapes the way we see the world to a large extent as social media has significant influence on the morals and beliefs of a person. In the current climate, social media has become akin to a conscience. Everywhere we go, we see it feeding into the minds of people and influencing every thought, opinion and decision. Therefore, those with the view that social media does not largely shape the way we see the world are wrong as social media has inevitably become a major guidepost in the lives of people. One can no longer claim that their influences stem from their environments as numerous worlds and environments have been created on social media itself, all of which are filled with thoughts and opinions that can change one's viewpoints drastically. One example of this is the Jihadist terrorist group that utilises Telegram channels, a social media application, to disseminate information on terrorism and attacks, effectively spreading their ideologies and influencing others. People on social media, without being fully aware, log onto such extremist platforms and fall prey to radicalisation, changing the foundation of their morals and world view to that of such intense ideologies. In fact, a 16-year-old teenager in Singapore was detained in 2021, when found to have made plans to attack a mosque in Singapore as a result of such radicalisation. This highlights just how influential social media is in formulating our worldviews, where one's morals and beliefs can be changed online due to its menacing and constant presence, where even a once normal with societal values ingrained can skew his perception of the world so drastically. Therefore, due its ever growing and overbearing presence, social media has an immense influence on the world view of people, even more so than upbringing and environmental influences.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Sound rebuttal initiated. Understanding of POC: Sound, but needs more discussion on why one factor is stronger than the other (social media vs upbringing). Relevance of Examples: Even here, the example of radicalisation can be used to discuss the dichotomy mentioned above. Contextualisation: Sound and relevant. Suggestions for Improvement: Include discussion on why social media is more powerful than upbringing as this is your main contention.
Thirdly, social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent as it is inherently designed to manipulate our cognitive biases to the world around us. Social media's design structure is fundamentally rooted in changing the tastes and preferences of users, so that we click on the next post, like the next video and see another advertisement. Social media companies such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook all use artificial intelligence in order to appeal and capture our attention in a bid to see which application can keep us occupied the longest, and thus make the most money. Therefore, the excessive usage of social media ends up changing the way we perceive the world in terms of what we like, what trends we want to follow and what is popular. In a Netflix documentary called the Social Dilemma, Tristan Harris, a former Google ethicist, highlighted the extent to which social media held the capability to change our world view, where technology firms use and track every minute of your social media usage and track that data to give you a completely different forum to feed depending on your personality. This is all to keep users engaged. This can be seen in numerous conspiracy theories such as The Earth is Flat theory, in which even celebrities got caught up in and advocated. This conspiracy theory was purposefully put on feeds to change mindset and opinions, as creating controversy engages users for the longest amount of time. Therefore, the calculated and intentional way in which social media applications are designed fundamentally attack our perceptions and try to change them, shaping the way we see the world in an understated, but significant way. The manipulation of data and consistent conditioning to like and click on trends is a successful effort to shape the way we see the world, changing our perceptions almost entirely.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Topic sentence is clearly stated. Understanding of POC: Sound, with relevant elaboration of the hidden and intentional nature of clicks and A.I. working to feed us curated feeds. Relevance of Examples: Effective use and linking of the example to the POC. Contextualisation: Current and sound. Suggestions for Improvement: Add one more common example (other than the conspiracy theories) to show how, on a daily basis for most social media users, their feeds seem to be about ordinary matters/things but are actually curated and designed to influence them. Perhaps cite an example on consumer items?

Ultimately, social media shapes the way we see the world to a large extent because of the magnitude with which it is utilized and the extent of impact it has on our behaviour, views and beliefs. A quote by a technology expert pointed out how “Only two industries describe their consumers to be users; social media and illegal drug industries.” This truly shows how social media is comparable to a drug, one capable of drastic impact and significant change, leaving the way we see the world marred and disillusioned. However, the control we exercise and the discretion we possess are the only tools that will allow us to shape the way we see the world ourselves, removing the excessive influence and chokehold of social media on our perceptions of the world.	An apt ending with a nice quote which sums up the power and influence of social media.
Marker’s Overall Comment: Content + Largely valid and cogent points. + Scope is evident, with some well-elaborated points. - Some points lack range of examples or clear elaboration of examples with regard to the POC. Language + Lucid and confident language evident. + Clearly organised and structured. + Some parts are quite persuasive. Ayesha Siddiqah 22A301	

Q6. Is there still a place for movie theatres in today’s world?

Sample Essay	Marker’s Comments
In a scene from Kenneth Branagh’s ‘Belfast’ (2021) - a memoir of his own childhood - the main character sits in a movie theatre, accompanied by his family, staring with awe at the moving images on the screen in front of him. Yet this Academy Award-winning film was most likely mainly streamed on televisions and tiny mobile screens all over the world. With the unparalleled convenience and accessibility of streaming services offered in the current age, are movie theatres still relevant and needed in the world? Some may say that moviegoing is a nostalgic pastime for many and brings audiences a communal experience that cannot be felt elsewhere. However, the numerous options and experiences streaming offers cannot be denied, as it caters to a larger range of audiences. Furthermore, the fact that traditional media is slowly pivoting to adapt to this new technology, makes movie theatres obsolete in the world in my opinion.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Clear Stand stated. Understanding of POC: Clearly explained and supported by a strong stand, with the current context elaborated on. Contextualisation: Sound, supported by references to modern day movies and alternatives to movie theatres.
Is there a better feeling than being transported to the world presented to us on the big screen, with popcorn in hand and a bunch of friends sitting right next to you in a darkened cinema? Defenders of the movie theatre would argue that this communal experience cannot be replicated anywhere else. New films, even today, have always had their premieres shown in cinemas, rather than having screeners mailed out and having a Zoom-styled red carpet. Watching films in cinemas has always been the original way of enjoying movies, right from the first public film projection at the Le Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris, circa 1895, where audiences were collectively startled by the train on screen that was seemingly thundering straight towards them. The phrase “movie magic” may only truly be experienced in a theatre, as emotions are evoked in audiences when watching a film with others, whether it is horror, delight, or trauma. Today, this communal experience is perhaps needed more than ever. Our post-socially-distanced selves need both a	Quality of Topic Sentences: Though it is not in the first sentence, the topic sentence is clear: that movie theatres provide a communal experience. Understanding of POC: Sound Relevance of Examples: While relevant, can afford to have more recency. Contextualisation: “Today’s world” needs to be clearly explained: what does “post-socially-distanced selves” mean in terms of the relevance to movie theatres?

means for escapism and a place to just be together with others again. When watching a film at home now, for example, one can easily be distracted by their surroundings; in cinemas however, you are essentially forced to be focused on the film (audiences are sometimes too scared to even turn on their phones to look at the time, lest they become a distraction themselves). Hence, one can experience a film as intended, in full, and most importantly, alongside the people they love.	Suggestions for Improvement: Need to unpack the communal aspect, including characteristics of “today’s world” (see above). Also, be clear if you are presenting a concession, as signposting at the end of paragraph is unclear, thus leading to a contradiction.
There is no denying the fact that cinemas are a special place for people to retreat, relax and connect with others, and that moviegoing cannot be fully replicated at home. However, when looking at the numerous benefits of online streaming, one has to agree that it is definitely very attractive to consumers as well. Firstly, home streaming is accessible, affordable and convenient compared to movie theatres. Nowadays, with too many services to count, the price of a subscription is much more worth it — a single month’s subscription, for less than SGD 20, gives one access to hundreds of movie and television (TV) titles that one could only dream of finishing in their lifetime. Conversely, that subscription price would only be enough for one or two tickets to the cinema. Hence, more and more people are switching to streaming services and foregoing the weekly trip to the theatre (which also costs extra due to travelling fees and time spent travelling). Streaming services are made to entice people to spend, releasing one or more titles every other day to keep our picky minds interested. The Covid pandemic has made it even clearer that streaming services are the future of entertainment, rendering even network TV useless in providing content. When movie theatres closed all around the world due to the pandemic, audiences were still able to enjoy new shows that the services pumped out, and did not have to even worry about running out of content to watch. In cities with cinemas on every street, the lack of interest in traditional moviegoing has made it incredibly hard for them to profit. Hence, long-standing cinemas like the ArcLight in the U.S. have not been able to open back up. It can be seen that the movie theatre is not as relevant anymore.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Relevant and sound. Understanding of POC: Clearly addressed, showing the irrelevance of movie theatres. Relevance of Examples: Relevant and contextually current example. Contextualisation: “Today’s world” is quite clearly unpacked, with the clear explanation of the benefits of online streaming services and the pandemic. Suggestions for Improvement: Be careful that relevance is maintained throughout. For example, more needs to be said about the irrelevance of theatres rather than the benefits of subscription services.
Also, streaming services cater to practically every type of media consumer in the world. In cinemas, only a handful of selected films that managers deem “popular” are played. Not everyone will have interest in those films. Foreign films, independent films or documentaries rarely get the spotlight in most cinemas - even ones that supposedly show more arthouse films, like The Projector (Singapore). It still needs revenue and mainly shows films that can guarantee an audience, like the recent sensation “Everything Everywhere All at Once” (2022), (which has been playing in its screening rooms for months). However, many other films are overlooked. Audiences that crave these lesser-known films can then turn to streaming, as there is a much higher chance of finding and watching those films. Streaming service Mubi focuses on independent and classic films from arthouse filmmakers and allows its viewers to find hidden gems from different countries or debut films from no-name directors. Besides giving these creators the stage for their films to be recognised and seen, it allows audiences who enjoy stepping out of the IP-filled world of entertainment to find content they take interest in. Another example is Disney+, a more well-known service that has (almost) the whole library of Disney-owned films for viewers to watch. Furthermore, since films are typically released relatively soon after their theatrical release windows, viewers are not missing out on much. Each service has conveniently categorized film and TV titles into genres and sub-genres for easy navigation. Moreover, movie theatres do not have	Quality of Topic Sentences: Sound opening line, supported by the conversely limited movie theatre. Understanding of POC: Again, perhaps less should be said about the benefits of streaming services, and more on why movie theatres are becoming obsolete in today’s world. Relevance of Examples: Recency established with reference to movies in 2022, for example. Contextualisation: Though the examples are current, there needs to be more explicit unpacking of “Today’s world”. Suggestions for Improvement: Certain elements of repetition should be avoided. Essentially, the point is about the limited range of movies shown in movie theatres – focus on this point.

the ability to let one choose from a large library of films, but a home streaming service can, and that is what is so appealing about the latter.	
Finally, in this digital age, traditional media and the film industry as a whole are pivoting to different forms of entertainment, and movie theatres are being left behind in the dust. Television has taken the world by storm and is clearly now the main priority for big studios like Marvel and Disney, who are pushing for numerous shows to be released every year, in addition to movies. TV shows are not traditionally shown in theatres, and hence, people turn to streaming instead and lose interest in traditional moviegoing. To provide for this increase in demand, profit-driven film distributors are coming out with their own services or collaborating with existing ones, and even releasing some films exclusively on those platforms. Audiences do not seem to oppose this shift to streaming. A case in point would be the film 'CODA' (2021), which won the biggest prize of Best Picture (along with two other Oscars) at the most recent Academy Awards, becoming the first film distributed by a streaming company - Apple TV+ - to win Best Picture. Now, films released on streaming are getting worldwide acclaim. During the pandemic, prestigious film festivals, like the Sundance Film Festival or the Toronto International Film Festival, pivoted to partially - or fully - online viewing styles. Festivals that were once exclusive to the rich or well-travelled are now also open to viewers all around the world. Even though the Covid measures have been relaxed, Sundance Institute mentioned that the partial online festival was a feature to stay. The switching of gears by the film industry has certainly benefitted the regular cinephile and perhaps taken some of the "magic" away from going to the physical theatre. These changes are happening so fast that movie theatres have little time to react and not much to do to salvage the undeniable change in how audiences are viewing content.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Sound and clearly stated in the first sentence. Understanding of POC: Need to fully and explicitly explain why movie theatres are "left behind in the dust". Relevance of Examples: Current and relevant examples that are quite well developed. Contextualisation: "Today's world" is addressed well, showing the elements of the digital age. Suggestions for Improvement: See above point on "understanding of POC". Also, need to clarify if TV shows and movie theatres can co-exist OR is the former a replacement for the latter?
Though movie theatres may never really become extinct in today's world, it is certainly not a need but more of a nostalgic location. The online streaming craze has swept up consumers all around the world by its irresistible accessibility, plethora of options, and ever-growing library of content. So, as long as technology is present in the world, movie theatres are getting pushed out of the limelight - slowly but surely.	Movie theatres as a "nostalgic location" was not quite explained in the essay. Avoid mentioning this in the conclusion.
Marker's Overall Comment: Content + Largely valid points, but some paragraphs could do with more thorough development. + Scope is evident, with some well-elaborated points. - Some repetitions and gaps in argument. - Needs more contextualisation "in today's world". - Need to avoid turning the question into one on "the benefits of streaming services". The focus should be on the relevance/irrelevance of movie theatres. Language + Clear and confident language evident. + Clearly organised and structured. - Some signposting can make the argument flow better. Ang See Tien 22S203	

Q12: Are harsh punishments ever justified?

Sample Essay	Marker's Comments
Is it ever morally right to punish the worst of criminals? In countries with strict laws like Singapore and China, many citizens are influenced by the harsh punishments meted out on criminals by their government such as capital punishment and incarceration. They tend to support the view that criminals deserve punishment as criminals have violated the law that everyone has the responsibility to abide. In older times, when monarchs and autocrats ruled the society, they go by the slogan – “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”. Thieves had their hands severed, while murderers and kidnappers were tortured in the same ways that they treated their victims. Many felt that justice was served because criminals were getting what they deserved and victims were vindicated. However, people have come to realise that it is never right to inflict harm on others despite what they have done. People in the past were simply giving in to their tribal nature which they should have evolved from. Therefore, harsh punishments should not be justified. Not only does it violate the right of criminals but it also hardens convicts and increases recidivism rates. However, some will think that it can act as a deterrence against criminals and serve as retribution. In this essay, I will explain why harsh punishment should not be justified.	Clear Stand: A clear stand is stated, followed by a preview of the points to be discussed. Understanding of POC: The mention of incarceration is rather vague. Not all jail terms can be considered “harsh punishments”. Contextualisation: The question suggests that currently, there are some who hold the view that harsh punishments are not justified. This should have been at least briefly explained. Suggestions for Improvement: There is too much description of the past. Focus on the present-day context.
Many critics of the justice system think that harsh punishment is necessary as it can deter criminals. They assume that criminals are rational and consider the cost-benefit analysis of committing a crime. Criminals consider committing crimes as they gain more from their crime which makes it worthwhile to serve a jail term. However, harsh punishments will make them realise that committing a crime is not worth it, which successfully prevents potential crime. Moreover, finding out about the rough experiences faced by inmates will scare away those who want to commit petty crimes. In Singapore, capital punishment, also known as the death penalty, is used to punish drug dealers. Drug dealers who possess drugs beyond a certain weight will be sentenced to death. Even dealers with mental issues are charged with the same harsh punishment. Although such measures are inhumane, it must be acknowledged that such measures have shown success. A study done by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) revealed that majority of drug dealers from overseas (that were caught) smuggled below the threshold to avoid the death penalty. This has shown that Singapore's harsh laws against drug dealers have effectively affected the decisions of criminals. Therefore, harsh punishments can act as deterrence.	Quality of Topic Sentences: A clear topic sentence to start the paragraph. Understanding of POC: The POC is clearly addressed, with the OV showing why harsh punishments – in the form of the death penalty – serve as an effective deterrent. Relevance of Examples: The point is that harsh punishments are a deterrent, but the example from the MHA actually proves that its deterrent function does not work since drug dealers still smuggle drugs (though it is below the threshold). Contextualisation: Perhaps more could be said about the current context and explain why harsh punishments are still used by governments.
However, such deterrence assumes that criminals are behaving rationally. With most crimes being caused by vices such as alcohol and drugs or overwhelming emotions such as rage, most crimes are committed irrationally. Instead of harsh punishment, rehabilitation will be more effective in helping these criminals, as it directly solves the cause of why they commit the crime. Rehabilitation can help them to overcome addiction to vices and address their mental health. Meanwhile harsh punishment does little in helping them reflect on their action. In countries like Norway, rehabilitation instead of incarceration is used. They acknowledge that most criminals are also victims and need assistance in reintegrating back to society. A lot of funding is put into therapy and education for criminals to learn essential skills needed in jobs. It has shown success as recidivism rates are as low as 20% in Norway as compared to about 80% in the US where harsh punishments are used.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Topic sentence is clearly stated. Understanding of POC: Too much of this paragraph is about rehabilitation. The focus should be on why harsh punishments are not justified. Relevance of Examples: Similar to the above, the example should not be about rehabilitation, but about the ineffectiveness of harsh punishments. Contextualisation:

Therefore, harsh punishment is not justified as it will not be a useful deterrence.	Again, more could be said about the current world and link this to why, in this day and age, harsh punishments are not justified.
Families and friends of victims may argue that harsh punishments vindicates the victim. They feel that the victim will be served justice if the criminal were to be severely punished. It also answers to the social contract theory in which those in a society are bonded to an invisible contract which takes away a portion of their rights. If one were to break the law, it is equivalent to breaking the “contract”, so they are forfeiting their rights to life. This “contract” brings about a peaceful and crime-free society which is essential for a living condition. Therefore, harsh punishments will serve as retribution and is justified.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Clearly stated from the start. Understanding of POC: The justification for why harsh punishments is justified lacks context. What happens if harsh punishments are meted out for less serious crimes? Is it then justified? Relevance of Examples: There is no real/concrete example. Contextualisation: See above point on POC. Suggestions for Improvement: The part on social contract is rather vague and needs to be unpacked more. Who are the parties in this social contract? What has this contract to do with one’s rights?
However, the view above is flawed. The social contract theory is a metaphor about the justice system and there is no proof to signing the contract. The contract also fails to consider exceptions which is a common occurrence in our world. On the other hand, it does not bring justice to the victim as severely punishing the criminal is violating the criminal’s rights, which means that another crime is being committed. Therefore, it is morally wrong to use harsh punishments, so it is unjustified.	Quality of Topic Sentences: A rather poorly crafted rebuttal and topic sentence, too easily dismissing the social contract theory as having “no proof”, and failure to consider exceptions. but not explaining them. Understanding of POC: More needs to be said about why harsh punishments is equivalent to violating criminal’s rights, and how/why this in turn is in itself a crime. Relevance of Examples: There is no example to illustrate the point.
Harsh punishment increases recidivism rates. This is because physical punishment and being locked up in prison cells will not teach criminals anything. They will either be vengeful about the pain they are receiving or idling in their prison cells. They will have nothing to offer to society when their jail term is over. It must be acknowledged that most criminals get out of jail one day, so heavy punishment is not justified as it can bring harm to the society in the form of vengeful criminals. In the 1970s, America adopted a “Get Tough Approach” where more criminals were incarcerated and rehabilitation was unpopular. It acted as a deterrent for both criminals and onlookers. Crimes committed led to much longer jail terms than before. It has shown little success and put a lot of pressure on government funding. Billions of dollars were spent on incarcerating criminals yearly. However, it has shown little success and recidivism rates even increased by 20%. This is due to ex-convicts being separated from their families and having no job opportunities, so they have nothing to lose. Therefore, harsh punishments are not justified as it is not helpful to society and also the criminals.	Quality of Topic Sentences: The topic sentence sounds rather extreme. Do criminals not learn anything at all from harsh punishments? Understanding of POC: Some rather sweeping statements made about criminals undergoing jail terms - which is not necessarily harsh punishment. Relevance of Examples: Noted on the example, but it is rather dated. A more updated example of current trends on recidivism could have been provided. Contextualisation: As mentioned, more needs to be said about current day trends on recidivism.

	Suggestions for Improvement: Again, a distinction needs to be made between harsh punishment and jail terms. Are recidivism rates high for those who received harsh punishments or just those who served prison time?
Moreover, harsh punishments hardens criminals. Harsh punishments naturally entail criminals being locked in prison cells. These prisons, unfortunately, are known to be a “school” for criminals. There are many notorious criminals and gangs which provide new criminals with connections for crime. They will become more confident in increasing crime. This contradicts the whole point of harsh punishments which aims to make criminals unable to recommit their crime out of fear being punished again. In the US, it is said that criminal earnings increased by USD 11,000 inside of jails. Furthermore, it is known that in most US prisons, there are gangs controlling the prison instead of wardens. Therefore, harsh punishments are not helpful and can make criminals commit worse crimes, so it should not be justified.	Quality of Topic Sentences: Simple and clear. Understanding of POC: Relevance of Examples: It is not clear how criminal earnings increasing supports the point on hardening criminals. This needs further elaboration. Contextualisation: Some attempt at providing the context in prisons. Suggestions for Improvement: Perhaps more could be said on why criminals are hardened. Why would exposure to gangs cause one to learn from them? Is it due to the harsh conditions of some jails?
In conclusion, harsh punishment should not be justified. It increases recidivism rates, hardens criminals, puts a lot of pressure on government spending and is an ineffective deterrent. I believe that instead of harsh punishments, rehabilitation should be used as it helps the society economically and also brings about a safer environment for all.	Instead of merely summarising the points mentioned, perhaps more could be said about the changing trends today and the move towards less harsh forms of punishment.
Marker’s Overall Comment: Content + Largely valid points. + Scope is evident, with some well elaborated points. - Some points lack examples or clear elaboration of examples. Language + Clear and confident language evident. + Clearly organised and structured. + Some parts are quite persuasive. Timothy Wang Yi Xi 22S101	