

For and against:

You have had a class discussion about different forms of travel. Your teacher has now asked you to write an essay presenting the arguments for and against travelling by boat.

Introduction

Did you know the boat was one of the first forms of transport? A hundred years ago, the only way to make a journey across the sea was by boat. Nowadays, however, when it is possible to fly from one continent to another in the space of a few hours, is there any reason to travel by boat?

Main Body

Although the boat is a rather old-fashioned way of travelling, it has certain advantages. **To begin with**, boats are usually more comfortable than planes or cars. Instead of staying in your seat for the whole journey, you can go for a walk on the deck, eat in a restaurant, or even go shopping. Having more space to move around makes a long journey much more pleasant. **Furthermore**, boats are often cheaper than other forms of travel. **For example**, a boat ticket usually costs less than a plane ticket. **Finally**, boats are a safe alternative to cars and planes. There are fewer accidents at sea than in the air or on the roads.

However, travelling by boat does have its disadvantages. It usually takes much longer than other forms of travel. **As a result**, it can be more tiring. **In addition**, boat trips can be very unpleasant when the weather is bad or the sea is rough, making journeys uncomfortable or even frightening.

Conclusion

All things considered, although there are some disadvantages to travelling by boat, I believe it is a very enjoyable experience. Journeys may take longer, but if you have time to spare, you can take advantage of the many facilities which boats have to offer and enjoy a pleasant voyage.

Source: Successful Writing. Intermediate. Page 83.

For and against:

“Censorship is necessary in modern society.” Discuss.

Censorship is an issue which frequently generates a great deal of heated debate, with supporters maintaining that it is vital in order to protect society, whilst opponents claim that it is an unjustifiable restriction of public access to information.

Firstly, all countries have secrets which must be safeguarded for reasons of national security. For instance, if an enemy country were to acquire such highly sensitive information, the effects could be catastrophic. Consequently, governments have to have the power to restrict access to information concerning areas such as the armed forces or particular aspects of foreign policy.

Secondly, it is often argued that censorship is necessary to prevent the broadcast and publication of obscene material which is considered offensive or harmful to public morals. Many people feel that, without censorship the public would be constantly subjected to material that the majority would find offensive. For this reason, the government has a duty to impose certain restrictions on the mass media by censoring films and texts which contain explicit scenes of sex, violence or foul language.

In contrast, opponents of censorship point out that when it is abused by governments, censorship becomes an instrument used to misinform society and maintain power. In order to control the flow of information which reaches the public, repressive regimes try to put constraints on the media, thus denying citizens the right to information owing to the fact that governments believe it may lead them to seek greater freedom.

Furthermore, it is generally felt that mature adults are able to make informed choices about what they watch, read and listen to and should, therefore, be permitted to make their own decisions. For example, some comedians make use of offensive language and taboo subjects in their performances. Critics of censorship argue that the only people who will watch or listen to such material are adults who have made a conscious decision to do so. Thus, it is claimed, it is unjust to censor material like this since it is not forced upon people who may subsequently be offended by it.

All things considered, it can be concluded that a certain degree of censorship is always necessary. The best course of action would be to attempt to achieve a balance between the requirements of the country and the public on the one hand, and individuals' rights on the other.



Source: Successful writing. Proficiency. Page 61

For and against:

There is an alternative paragraph plan you may use when writing for and against compositions. When following this plan you present both an argument in favour and the opposing viewpoint in the same paragraph. In such compositions the arguments for and against must be equal in number.

Example:

“Greater freedom does not necessarily lead to greater happiness.”
Discuss.

Over the years, mankind has recognised the need for personal and social freedom, and this is perhaps one of the most important social advancements ever made. However, whether it has led to increased personal happiness is highly debatable; many people would argue that greater freedom has led to increased social disorder and personal dissatisfaction.

Firstly, it is true that people are now more at liberty to choose how to live their lives. For example, in the Western world at least, the choice of where to live, what career to pursue and which religion to follow has never been greater. In addition to this, people have more leisure time in which to enjoy a wider range of recreational activities. On the other hand, it may be argued that this increased freedom can lead people to take things for granted and expect too much from life. As an example of this, the greater choice of material goods available has resulted in people quickly growing bored with their possessions. Consequently, no sooner have they acquired something new than they tire of it. They find short-term happiness in material goods and entertainment, but boredom and frustration soon send them looking for fresh distractions.

Secondly, social and moral attitudes have become less rigid. This has allowed for a greater variety of lifestyles and more freedom in human relations. This is illustrated by the fact that pupils and teachers now treat each other as equals, and parent-child relationships are now much more relaxed. Nevertheless, some people believe that this increase in freedom has resulted in the escalation of social problems. They argue that the current lack of discipline has given rise to a breakdown in the traditional family and the decay in educational standards as well as the rise in juvenile delinquency. Thus, it may be said that society is becoming more and more dangerous because of the very fact that people are more open-minded than they were in the past.

To conclude, there is evidence both to support and refute the view that greater freedom does not necessarily lead to greater happiness. On the one hand, people have more opportunities to raise their standard of living. On the other hand, the many examples of protests, strikes and criminal activities which are a feature of modern society are a sign that, although people may be free, they are not necessarily happier.

Source: Successful writing. Proficiency. Page 68

Opinion:***English and Maths are more important subjects than Art and Music***

Isn't it unfortunate that in today's society there are so many people who cannot read, write or even do arithmetic? I strongly believe that, although subjects such as Art and Music are important, English and Maths are the most fundamental part of our education.

In the first place, when you know how to read, write and do simple calculations, you have the tools required in order to deal with everyday matters. For example, being able to read and write can help you communicate and express yourself clearly. Moreover, you need basic maths for such daily chores as doing your shopping, paying your bills and managing your money.

Furthermore, it is essential to have a good knowledge of English and Maths in order to find even the simplest job. Reading, writing and mathematical skills are the minimum requirements that most employers demand.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Art and Music are just as significant as English and Maths. For instance, learning how to draw or play an instrument can introduce a child to a whole new world. In addition to this, subjects such as Art and Music can provide children with a well-rounded education rather than just basic skills.

All things considered, though, it seems to me that English and Maths are vital subjects. Without learning to read, write or do arithmetic, people may have difficulties coping with even the simplest tasks in daily life.

Source: Successful writing. Intermediate. Page 89

Opinion:

“The mass media have an adverse effect on moral standards.” Do you agree?

A Newspapers, in one form or another, have been in existence for centuries, their purpose being to spread news. Public radio and television services, on the other hand, have only been available in the UK since 1922 and 1932 respectively, and were introduced with the intention of informing, educating and entertaining. While radio seems to have largely maintained its standards, newspapers and TV have, in my opinion, totally abused their position of power, resulting in a serious decline in moral standards. As Richard Hoggart said, “They are full of a corrupt brightness, of improper appeals and moral evasions ...”.

Perhaps the most serious offender is television, as today’s broadcasters seem to have completely abandoned the issue of ethics. This is more than apparent in the films and programmes which are intended to entertain, as they bombard the viewer with explicit language, sex and violence. Similarly, the news “informs” us using devastating images of grief, desperation and death. It is often felt that by exposing the public to such graphic depictions, television producers have contributed to our becoming immune to shocking behaviour and events which, in the past, we would have been upset or offended by.

Furthermore, newspapers, especially the tabloids, have come to depend on overly-explicit articles and pictures in order to guarantee sales. It is commonplace nowadays to see, for instance, photographs of celebrities’ most private moments or horrific scenes of death occupying the front pages of daily publications. The fact that these images are intended — and generally manage — to sell newspapers displays the craving for sensationalism which exists within society today.

In contrast, it must be admitted that the mass media have a lot to offer in the way of information and entertainment. The news and documentaries can be very informative and educational as long as the material is handled in a responsible manner. The problem is that, because people are willing victims of the media’s irresponsibility, the media continue to produce material which is unacceptable by all moral standards.

To conclude, it is clear that the public have a right to know and that producers should be allowed a certain degree of artistic licence, but should we not draw the line somewhere before we lose sight of our principles altogether?

Providing solutions to problems:***How can we make our city a better place to live?***

Heavy traffic, air pollution and litter are among the most serious problems modern cities face nowadays.

Ours is no exception. What can we do, then, to help make our city more pleasing to its residents?

First of all, it would be a good idea to encourage people to use public transport instead of their cars, especially when commuting to work. The result would be fewer cars on the roads, and therefore fewer traffic jams.

Secondly, steps should be taken in order to solve the problem of air pollution. The situation could be improved if factories were moved out of the city. If this happened, the air would not be so polluted.

Finally, efforts should be made to make our city a cleaner and healthier place to live. A useful suggestion would be to put more litter bins in the streets. If this was done, people would stop dropping their rubbish on the ground, and our city would be cleaner.

There are many ways to make our city a better place to live. Adopting some of these measures would definitely result in better conditions for everyone.

Source: Successful writing. Intermediate. Page 95

Providing solutions to problems:***“What could be done to improve the lives of the elderly?”***

For many elderly people the latter part of their life is not a time to relax and enjoy retirement, but rather a difficult and unhappy period, owing to financial worries, failing health and loneliness. As life expectancy increases, the average person lives well beyond the age of retirement. As a result, the elderly make up an ever-increasing percentage of society, which makes it more important than ever for a real effort to be made in improving the lives of senior citizens.

One way to deal with the situation would be to ensure that the elderly have enough money on which to live.

Obviously, when a person stops working, they still require a source of income to cover their basic needs such as food, accommodation and heating. A clear solution to the problem is for the government to make sure that the state pension is adequate for these needs. Furthermore, free financial advice should be made available to retired people so that the stress of worrying about money could be reduced as far as possible.

Steps should also be taken to overcome problems the elderly face as a result of deteriorating health due to old age, and inadequate health-care provisions. Again, the responsibility should fall to the government to provide access to the best health care available, which may necessitate paying for residential homes where the elderly can have round-the-clock nursing, or, at the very least, providing medication free of charge to all people over a certain age. As a result, old people would enjoy not only better health, but also peace of mind from the knowledge that they need not fear falling ill and being unable to pay for treatment.

The lives of old people could also be improved if attempts were made to address the problem of social isolation which so many of them face. If we organised trips for the elderly to community centres, visits from social workers or free bus passes to allow pensioners greater mobility, the effect would be to alleviate the problem of loneliness which marks the lives of so many old people living alone and far from their families.

One final suggestion, which would help enormously, is to change the attitude of the community towards its older members, who are all too often seen as a burden on society and dismissed as having little to do with modern life. We need to be taught from an early age to respect the views of old people, and appreciate their broader experience of life. This would help society as a whole, and encourage appreciation of the role that old people can still play today.

To sum up, there are several measures which could be taken to improve the lives of old people. If the government and individuals alike were to help, it would make retirement and old age a time to look forward to, rather than dread.

Source: Successful writing. Proficiency. Page 77