

2012-DSE
ENG LANG

PAPER 2 Model Essays

**2012 HKDSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
PAPER 2
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PART A

The best part of my job

Life is never monotonous for me. One day it's all about celebrity interviews, and the next I'm putting my nose to the grindstone, working on some political reviews. Life is fast-paced, dynamic, and challenging, and it changes along with the rapid changes in society. It's impossible to foresee what excitement lies ahead. Everyday I jump up from my bed, anticipating the delight to come, complimented by my colleagues' sense of humour and the chance to meet an array of fabulous and influential figures, and learn and prosper from their wisdom.

The biggest challenge I have ever faced in my job

The biggest challenge for a news reporter? None other than the approach of a deadline. As a news reporter, it is no longer about merely submitting your writing. You are always supposed to work with profundity and strive for excellency, in both quality and quantity. Every single piece of your news report should stand alone as a masterpiece. It must. Imagine a typo that turns "Obama" into "Osama"! "I was in a rush" is no longer a feasible excuse. Excellence is necessity. The biggest challenge is day-to-day life.

My school days

Even back when I was a student, I always threw myself headlong into editorial work. I was the senior editor of the schools' editorial board, and I was responsible for writing events reviews for the school magazine. I started out writing intending only to do a good job, and hoping that others would appreciate my work – but little did I know taking up such a position would entirely change my life.

Tips for potential future editors

See more, read more, write more! You need to carefully observe everything around you and develop your own perspective on issues. Hone your rough edges, and prepare yourself for a never-ending war with words. Grasp every single chance to write and allow your style to flourish and thrive. Being an editor is no easy job, but if you take into consideration the rewarding experiences and the paycheque, it is certainly worth the effort.

(322 words)

PART B

2. Learning English through Sports Communication

I have been following the heated debate on the comparative values of virtual and real sports with much interest, and have decided today to offer my own view on this **contentious** issue. The recent technological developments in gaming have resulted in virtual sports coming ever closer to the actions and skills necessary in real sports, whilst, of course, taking into consideration the restrictive size of the average living-room. Despite aiming to **replicate** real sports as closely as possible, in my view **virtual sports** cannot be considered a **viable replacement** for real sport. However, I do not share the opinion that virtual sports are entirely worthless; they have several useful functions which I shall discuss presently.

I believe that real sports are undoubtedly preferable to virtual games, because they offer several benefits which simply cannot be **garnered** by playing similar games on a **games console**. Firstly, real sports are often played outside. It has been proven by scientific studies that being outside is extremely beneficial to health, as a result of the vitamin 'D' which is gained by spending time in the sun. The extra space offered by the 'great outdoors', as compared with the **confined space** within which virtual sports are conventionally played, also means that playing real sports provides significantly more exercise than their virtual alternative; the level of exercise required for real sports such as football and rugby cannot be compared to the **mere** arm-swinging required by game consoles such as the Wii. It is clear, then, that real sports are significantly better for the health. Furthermore, real sports are often played in teams, while virtual games are often played alone or just a couple of other people. There are a **plethora** of benefits to playing with a team, including the communication skills gained by communicating with team-members, and the boost to self-esteem resulting from individuals identifying as part of a team. Thus real sports are the best form of sport.

However, we cannot completely discount virtual sports; while real sports evidently offer more benefits, playing virtual sports is a reasonable alternative in certain cases. Sport is a vital form of recreation and exercise, in which everybody should **partake**. For those who find it difficult to take part in real sport, playing virtual sport may be the only way they can gain some experience of this pleasurable activity. For example, the ill and those responsible for small children may find it very difficult to commit to playing real sport regularly; the benefits of virtual sport in this case are that it can be played at any time, and can be played in one's own home.

In conclusion, real sport is far preferable to virtual sport, but not possible for all members of society. For those who cannot play real sport, the existence of virtual sport allows them to partake in this important and enjoyable activity. Virtual sport, then, should not be seen as an **equally laudable alternative** to real sport, but it is certainly better than no sport at all.

(502 words)

3. Learning English through Drama

The use of drama in schools has been on the rise following recent studies analysing the usefulness of this teaching technique. Although some parents oppose the use of drama in lessons, I feel that this opposition **stems from** a misunderstanding of the kind of drama techniques used, and a conservative **apprehension** regarding non-traditional teaching methods. As a student, my personal experience has shown that drama is an extremely useful tool for many subjects in school. Not only does it aid learning, and thus facilitate better exam results, but it equips students with valuable skills for their life beyond school.

Drama is an unquestionably valuable technique for teaching several subjects in school. I personally remember one English Literature lesson, in which the teacher had us **act out** a scene from a particularly difficult play. The very act of recreating part of this play aided our understanding of the language and content, and also **elevated our enthusiasm** for the play, which had been waning during the more traditional lessons. Dramatic techniques can also be utilised in other, perhaps more unexpected, subjects. By acting out a particular view, and watching their peers present a conflicting view, students gain secure understanding of the complexities of certain issues. In History and Geography, role play exercises such as this encourage students to **grapple with** conflicting views over political and environmental issues, for example. Furthermore, many students find it very difficult to maintain concentration during the traditional lesson, during which they must sit still and listen to a lecture; drama-based lessons, in which students are substantially involved, better suit this type of student. In my personal experience, lessons which **deviate from** the norm stick more securely in the mind, thus aiding recall in an examination.

As well as being particularly useful for securing knowledge of certain subjects, drama requires and develops certain skills which are beneficial in life beyond school; one purpose of school education, after all, is to equip students with the skills and knowledge which will allow them to become useful and responsible citizens. Before having the opportunity to practise drama at school, I considered myself a shy and quiet person. Drama has enabled me to **shake off** this limiting label, and has developed my confidence **at an astonishing rate**. Another skill that students gain in drama-based lessons is **empathy**; the practise of drama involves **putting oneself in another person's shoes**, and understanding their point of view. This skill is absolutely **imperative** in life, if one is to form successful relationships, both personally and in the workplace. Therefore, drama is also valuable for the general skills with which it equips students.

I personally **refute** any claim that drama is not useful in school. I acknowledge that it is not suitable for all school subjects, and to have it in every subject would be inappropriate. However, anybody who solely favours traditional teaching styles is **over-looking** an extremely valuable teaching and learning tool, because drama helps both understanding of the subject and of the world beyond the classroom walls.

(502 words)

4. Learning English through Poems and Songs

So last week was the big week: my band's first performance! We were all **a bag of nerves** before we went onstage. The only performances I'd ever done were at school, and playing music to a paying audience **is a completely different kettle of fish**. How would these people react to the songs that we had **slaved over** in my parents' garage for the past year? The songs were precious to us, and we loved them; the idea of presenting these **vulnerable entities** to a critical crowd was **nerve-wracking**. I'd had a nightmare the previous night, in which the crowd **booed** before I had even opened my mouth to sing. What if it was a vision of the future?

We all stood backstage, biting our nails and barely able to look one another in the eye, for fear of revealing our apprehension. My heart was banging against my chest as I heard the host shouting our band's name. The crowd gave a **half-hearted** cheer, which was more than I had expected for a band that no-one knew. I ran onto the stage, with my band behind me. At least they had their instruments to hide behind, while I had nothing but the skinny microphone stand **slap bang** in the middle of the stage. Again, I questioned my decision to take the position of lead singer, but I quickly shook these thoughts from my head as the band began the introduction to the first song of our set.

To my surprise and delight, the audience loved us. Our first song **went down a storm**, with the crowd dancing and clapping their hands. The atmosphere was absolutely **electric**, and it was incredible to see the crowd growing, as more and more people were drawn by the sound of our music and the sight of the crowd going wild. Luckily, it was a beautiful day in Victoria Park; the sun was shining, and people were high on the joys of life. I couldn't imagine trying to create a similarly **jubilant** atmosphere on a gloomy, rainy day. There were girls sitting high on the shoulders of their friends, and even one or two crowd-surfers, throwing their bodies into the mercy of the crowd and being carried along towards the stage. I know that most of the crowd was probably there to see subsequent bands, but for me, standing on that stage, I felt like a super-famous rock star. It was unbelievable.

An amazing experience for sure, but, of course, not everything went entirely to plan. The **nemesis** of every performer is the terrifying problem of "technical issues", which we experienced when my microphone cut out halfway through one of our best songs. But this was far from being an **irredeemable** disaster; the audience just cheered and laughed fondly as I attempted to yell my lyrics over the deafening band, until the stage technician ran on with a replacement.

I can hardly believe our first performance was such a success, and now we cannot wait for our next.

(503 words)

5. Learning English through Debating

Good morning. My name is Sarah Jones, and I am the captain of Meadowbank Secondary's debating club. I am speaking to you today in order to persuade as many people as possible to take the exciting opportunity to join this club. Anybody in the whole school is welcome to join this club, even if you have no previous experience of debating. First, I will explain the activities in which you will be able to take part, then I will **set out** the benefits of joining the debating club. Finally, I will explain the relevance of debating to your daily life, and how it can help you to be successful in your future.

In the debating club, we hold monthly debates against other schools in the area on fascinating issues such as 'This House believes science is a threat to humanity' and 'This House would allow prisoners to vote'. To prepare for these debates, we meet on a weekly basis in order to develop our debating skills and to build our arguments against the other school's team. After each highly competitive inter-school debate, there is a social event with music, snacks and drinks, to **propagate** a 'no hard feelings' atmosphere between the schools. You could be a part of these exciting events!

There are a number of benefits to joining the club. Firstly, you meet lots of people. Because the club is open to the whole school, it offers a fantastic opportunity to make friends with people whom you do not **ordinarily** meet in class, such as those in other year groups. As a result of the inter-school debates, and the socials which follow them, you can meet like-minded students from different schools. Who would pass up this chance to expand their **social circle**?

Are you keen to be involved in extra-curricular activities, but are not good at sport? Then the debating club is for you. As students, we are often reminded of the importance of **taking advantage of** the many opportunities provided by this school beyond our educational studies. If you have not yet found your **niche**, consider getting involved with debating. As a result of our regular successes in the inter-school competitive debates, your **involvement** will mean that you have made a direct contribution to the **respectable reputation** of Meadowbank Secondary in the community. As such, the debating club is well-respected by the headmistress, and will undoubtedly support your application to be a prefect or head-girl, if you choose to do so.

So how will debating improve your life? Debating equips you with many skills which will enable you to become successful later in life. The ability to speak confidently and **coherently** in public is necessary for many careers, in particular law. Even if you do not have your sights set on a career in law, you will gain an impressive level of personal confidence from regular public speaking. Debating is a **catalyst** to success in life!

Thank-you for your attention, and I do hope I have persuaded some of you to **give debating a try**.

(507 words)

6. Learning English through Popular Culture

Dear Editor,

The desire to be found attractive is a natural part of being human: attractiveness is an **evolutionary trait**, and there are some basic aspects of attractiveness, such as **symmetry**, that have been found to have a positive correlation with health and fertility. However, has our society taken things too far? Our attitude towards physical beauty in modern society can now be described as an obsession. I would like to comment on one particular **symptom** of this obsession with physicality: the dramatic increase in the popularity of **cosmetic surgery**. In 2010, China was third in the world for the number of cosmetic surgeries performed, with 3.4 million. At this incredible rate, cosmetic surgery is not an industry to be ignored. I consider below the few positive aspects of cosmetic surgery, but ultimately conclude that the negatives **outweigh** these positives.

In order to present a fair argument, I will first acknowledge those favourable aspects of the cosmetic surgery industry. In 2010, this industry generated 300 billion yuan, making it a major contributor to the economy. Being such an influential and popular industry, our society's obsession with cosmetic surgery provides thousands of jobs, supporting many families across the country. Furthermore, continued developments in the technicalities of surgery have meant that risk of something going wrong during the surgery itself is minimal. Of course, we must also **concede** that cosmetic surgery is not an industry that solely serves insecure teenagers obsessed with achieving a particular standard of beauty; many people resort to cosmetic surgery in order to reduce the consequences of **disfigurement** or scarring. For some people, cosmetic surgery is a **final resort**, and provides **vital relief** from crushingly low self-esteem or even **discrimination**.

Despite these slightly **redeeming** factors, I am of the firm opinion that the existence of cosmetic surgery has a highly negative influence on our society. The media creates a standard of beauty which is unobtainable for most, if not all, people. Although the cosmetic surgery industry can be seen as a symptom of this media creation, rather than a cause, it certainly contributes to society's unhealthy obsession with attempting to attain this standard. By enabling people to physically change their bodies to match media's 'expectations', the impossible standard becomes even more normalised. One particularly distressing aspect of society's obsession with physical beauty is that the young are the **hardest hit**. 30% of those treated for eating disorders in Hong Kong in 2012 were aged 16-20: a hugely **disproportionate** number. Any industry which supports the kind of body image that prompts eating disorders in the vulnerable should, in my eyes, be utterly ashamed of itself.

In conclusion, cosmetic surgery is an industry which encourages and contributes to a damagingly impossible standard of beauty. People are so engrossed by the media's portrayal of 'beauty' that they take ridiculous risks on order to try to **creep** closer to this physical ideal: cosmetic surgery is one such risk that our society could do without.

Yours faithfully,
Sarah Jones

(496 words)

7. Learning English through Short Stories

“Was that...?” I couldn’t finish the sentence, my mouth hanging uselessly open in shock. I was sure it was him. But... Surely not. I had seen my brother just a week or two before, and he was **penniless** as usual, **scrounging for** a few dollars for the bus to his next job interview. I ran up the road away from the Peninsular Hotel, to try to **catch another glimpse of** the red Ferrari. There it was. And the driver was my brother! It was! **How on earth** had this happened? The Ferrari flew down the road as the lights turned to green, carrying with it my brother, and the mystery of his too-sudden success.

In the following days, I tried to call him what must have been hundreds of times, but to no **avail**. This was highly unusual for him. In fact, he was usually calling me to ask for cash! Something was up. At last, I made the trip over to his flat, where he lived with two similarly **down-and-out** flatmates. As per usual, I held my breath as I walked along the stinking corridor to the familiar front-door with the **flaking** paint and strangely sticky doorbell. George, my brother’s flatmate, opened the door. “Jane! Oh! Um... Have you come to collect Spencer’s things?” he asked, looking behind me confusedly, as if expecting to see Spencer there.

“No,” I replied, frowning, “I was just wondering if he was in. I’d really like to speak to him.”

George looked even more **befuddled**, as he stuttered, “Oh... I thought you knew...”

“Knew what?” I cried, feeling as though I were **on the brink of** discovering the answer to this mystery.

“Spencer is gone. He... uh... came into some money. He’s... um... gone onto better things, you might say.”

After quizzing George some more, I realised that he either could not yield any more information, or simply would not. I **huffed** in frustration, and left.

The mystery remained a mystery for several more weeks, as I continued to attempt to contact my brother, torn between anger and worry for his unexplained absence. Finally, at long last, a phone call from an unrecognised number.

“Jane?” came my brother’s voice, breathless with panic.

“Spencer! It’s you! Where have you been? What’s going on? Are you alright?” I yelled down the phone, **stumbling over** the words in my rush.

“No, Jane. Look, I’ve done something stupid,” Spencer stuttered. A long pause. I held my breath, a lump rising in my throat and preventing me speaking. “I got involved in something I shouldn’t have, and now I’m in trouble.” His voice suddenly **cracked with** emotion, “You’ve got to help me!”

I drew my hand across my brow, wiping away the beads of **perspiration** that were forming there. I knew he couldn’t have come into so much money so quickly by any respectable means. “Tell me where you are. I’ll come right away,” I managed to say.

“No, Jane. You don’t understand. I...”

Then came the sudden **mocking** hum of the dialling tone. I dropped the phone to the floor.

(513 words)

8. Learning English through Workplace Communication

Dear Business Owner,

I am writing to inform you of a new government scheme called ‘Second Chance’, and to encourage you to take part in this exciting new opportunity for business owners in Hong Kong. I shall first outline the details, and then explain some of the benefits of joining this scheme. I sincerely hope that you will be persuaded to take part.

The aim of this project is to **incentivise** businesses to employ **reformed** criminals and drug addicts. The scheme is designed to benefit both the participants and the employers: the particular benefits to the employer are outlined below. Allow me to reassure you that the participants of the scheme are well and truly ‘reformed’. After serving their **sentence** or completing their time at a rehabilitation unit, the participants volunteer to undergo a rigorous training scheme to prepare them for the world of work. They are then assessed for their suitability for work. The participants are those members of our society who have been driven to desperate measures to survive and who now deserve a second chance at becoming responsible citizens of our society.

By taking part in this **government-backed scheme**, you will be offering a **hand of** support and acceptance to those that society have failed thus far. **Leavers of prisons** and rehabilitation units are extremely vulnerable, and **criminal recidivism rates** are high; this scheme aims to tackle the issue of reoffending, and thus to make our communities a safer place for everybody. You are in the **enviable** position of being able to contribute to the reduced crime rate of your community, by taking part in this form of **restorative** justice. Criminals and drug addicts, by entering the honest working world – *your* honest working world – are enabled to give back to society, and to be influenced by the **impeccable** examples of yourself and your colleagues. The participants of this scheme are willing to change and to contribute to their communities; as a result of this, their work ethic will be absolutely **unrivalled**. The participants will be so appreciative of the second chance that you have offered to them, that they will throw themselves into their work with unsurpassed enthusiasm.

While I am sure that the prospect of contributing to society by taking part in ‘Second Chance’ is enough to persuade you, there are several more **tangible** benefits of taking part in this scheme. The government is so supportive of the scheme that they have offered tax breaks for participating businesses. Furthermore, your participation may contribute to the success of your business; recent surveys have shown that your community is wholly supportive of the scheme, and 68% of those asked stated that they would be more likely to use a business that is participating in ‘Second Chance’.

I hope that yours will be one of the **forward-thinking** businesses that shakes off the limiting prejudices that are holding back certain disadvantaged members of our community. For more information on ‘Second Chance’, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Jones

Intern, Hong Kong Correctional Services

(507 words)

9. Learning English through Social Issues

Depression is lonely. You lose interest in everybody and everything, and you feel as though nobody understands what you are going through. However lonely and isolating depression may feel, it is more common than you might think. Recent studies have found that one in five people in Hong Kong will suffer from a form of depression at some point in their lives. This article was inspired by a friend of mine who suffered from depression; it is awful to watch somebody you love going through something as terrible as depression, because you feel utterly helpless. This friend went through a severe bout of depression, but came out the other side. Here, I present a few of the tactics that she used, and which you, too, can use if you feel that you are **slipping into** depression.

Firstly, don't be afraid to ask for help. Depression is an isolating illness, but it is a medical condition which can be treated. When my friend recognised that her symptoms were not part of the normal **ups and downs** of life, she was brave enough to go to her doctor and ask for help. Because of the **severity** of her depression, she was given medication and referred to a counsellor. Even if your depression is not so severe as to **warrant** these dramatic measures, your doctor will recommend **coping strategies** to help you. However lonely you might feel, you do not have to face depression alone. It is a common medical condition, with which your doctor will be able to help you.

Another tactic that my friend used to beat her depression was **social activity**. When you are depressed, it can be very difficult to overcome the apathy and **lethargy** which accompany it. However, try to force yourself to leave your house and continue to take part in the activities that you enjoy. Even if you don't **feel up to it**, being sociable and spending time with friends is an important step to avoid the potential cycle of isolation associated with depression. Just spending time around people other than yourself is important; your friends will understand if you are not the life and soul of the party at present! If you are part of a sports team, or regularly exercise, do make sure that you continue this throughout your period of depression; if you do not **customarily** exercise, consider starting a sport. My friend regularly went running throughout her depression, and found this a highly **therapeutic exercise**. It has been scientifically proven that regular physical exercise helps both avoid and treat depression, by allowing you to feel that you are in control of your body, and consequently of other aspects of your life.

Ultimately, other people are key to your recovery from depression. While it may feel like a mammoth effort to retain contact with other people, when all you feel like doing is sitting alone and stewing with your negative thoughts, don't suffer alone. Reach out to those around you – the supportiveness and kindness of others may surprise you.

(506 words)