



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

General Studies B

GENB1

(Specification 2765)

Unit 1: Conflict

Report on the Examination

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GENB1 Conflict

General Comments

The paper was accessible to students. The majority of students used the cues provided to structure their answer. Most answers contained a good range of appropriate examples, although weaker responses tended to be over-reliant on examples from the question stem.

Question 1

Most students began with a definition of what is meant by the arts, usually in terms of popular and the high arts. They discussed the ease of accessibility to the arts, either in physical or technological terms, for example via the internet, museums, books and theatre productions, or in aesthetic terms, advocating the idea that there is art in every element of life and we are constantly surrounded by it. Age and class, and the stereotypes associated with them, were offered as factors that can both help and hinder access to either the high arts or the popular arts.

Higher level responses referred to access to the arts through education and understanding how to interpret the arts. Some pertinent examples were given of the promotion of the arts in schools, via the National Curriculum and option systems, and school concerts and performances.

Many responses focused on the issue of cost. The high price of theatre tickets, particularly in the West End, was juxtaposed with the minimal cost of museum entrance fees, street art such as Banksy's work, and televised arts. Some students developed this argument in terms of additional costs such as transport and accommodation required to access events like the Glastonbury Festival, London theatre or famous artwork such as the Mona Lisa.

The least successful answers tended to be generic, often disregarding the reference to "access" and containing no, or very few, examples of specific artists' work. Too many did not go beyond the examples in the stem of the BBC Proms and Theatre in the Park. Although some students developed these examples, giving further illustration of the events such as the availability of reasonably-priced tickets, the majority simply repeated the stem.

AO3 was the least well-addressed objective. Many students did try to explain why people consider the arts to be important, although they did so in general terms rather than relating their argument to the context of the question. Better responses discussed the place of the arts in developing self-confidence and bringing enjoyment, concluding that people will ensure they have access to what they enjoy. Others saw the importance of the arts to our heritage, such as the influence of Shakespeare on English and world literature.

Question 2

Most students began their answer with a definition of community. The most common interpretation was that of a local neighbourhood, but some thought more broadly, arguing from a global perspective, that the world is a global village and including, for example, online communities via social networking sites, religious communities, and school or work communities. The most successful answers were those that established their definition at the outset, as this formed the basis for the development of their answer. Some students focused too much on this cue, at the expense of the other cues, so their answers were not sufficiently analytical.

There were a lot of negative responses, focusing on youth anti-social behaviour, disruptive families, crime, barriers of race, religion, age and wealth, and the breakdown of community life.

Weaker responses listed activities that might take place in a local community; everything from litter-picking to provision of skate parks and community halls. These tended to be repetitious and often not used to support an argument. Better responses analysed the success of existing local examples of community activities, such as planned Jubilee celebrations and Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

The focus of the question was how communities might become better places in which to live, but many students devoted a large part of their answer to descriptions of communities in the past and why communities are breaking down. This approach was successful when students demonstrated awareness of tensions within communities, such as the racial tension underlying the 2011 riots, and how improvements might be made.

The least successful answers were too generic with no references to specific communities or people within them. More successful were those that referred to their own communities, giving personal examples of ways in which their community had been improved.

Few students successfully addressed cue 3 (the importance of community values), although a few acknowledged that shared values, such as supporting weaker members or sharing responsibility for the environment, can help to strengthen communities.

Question 3

Although the question stem relates to genetically-modified crops, the question itself requires students to discuss other recent scientific procedures. Many students, however, restricted their answers to genetically-modified crops. This inevitably limited their answers in terms of examples and breadth of discussion, and meant they often did not access the higher mark levels.

Many students, however, did demonstrate a reasonable knowledge and understanding of genetic modification and were able to discuss its advantages and disadvantages. The most successful responses, however, were those that moved beyond the stem to discuss other procedures such as abortion, bone marrow transplants, IVF and the development of controversial drugs using animal experimentation. Some, for example, referred to the mistakes of the past, such as the thalidomide controversy and the effects of nuclear disasters at Hiroshima and Fukushima. Weaker responses, however, failed to discuss the general implications of scientific developments or draw their examples together into a coherent argument.

The majority of students followed the three cues. AO3 was more evident in responses to this question than to any other. Most focused particularly on whether such procedures are the right thing to do and made a strong moral argument, debating, for example, the issue of whether it is right to create an embryo with the sole purpose of saving the life of another. Many also developed this moral argument to include the threat of such procedures being taken to the extremes of producing “designer babies” and human cloning in the desire to perfect the human race. The religious argument, whether such procedures are “playing God”, was also well explored, as was the cost implications of such procedures.

Question 4

The majority of students showed a good level of knowledge and understanding of chain stores and their benefits to the consumer. A number of students discussed the impact of chains on groups other than consumers. Some focused more on the benefits of chain stores to the companies themselves rather than to the consumer, particularly in relation to advertising and companies making a profit. Others discussed how chain stores create employment for local people and can create environmental issues. This type of discussion is not directly relevant to the question. These aspects can be related to the consumer highlighting the importance of students taking care to answer the question set.

Many students restricted their answer to the example given in the stem and to a one-sided argument of the benefits of chain stores. Better responses developed and exemplified, with a discussion of the pros and cons of chain stores for customers. The key areas of choice, quality, customer service and price were covered to some degree by the majority.

Relevant examples were generally included. Supermarket chains and the stores quoted in the stem featured heavily, as examples of good quality, product choice and availability and customer service. Some offered other examples such as John Lewis for good quality and price (“Never Knowingly Undersold”), Primark for poor quality, price and sweat-shop labour, and various named supermarkets for promotions and discount deals.

Some students discussed the growth in chain-store websites enabling online ordering, and how these can be beneficial to consumers in terms of convenience and product-knowledge, but also recognised that customers are unable to see the product or might incur costs when returning goods.

Many answers lacked balance, only discussing the positive elements of large chains. Although some students recognised that smaller shops may go out of business as a result of chain store dominance, they usually did not go beyond a simple statement. The most successful answers explored the differences between the services offered by small, specialist businesses and their impact on the consumer, and those offered by chain stores. They referred to the loss of individual expertise, personal service, and the dangers of monopolies, which might reduce choice and low prices for customers in the long run.

Question 5

Whilst this was a popular question, students’ interpretation of “those in the public eye” was often narrow. Most students focused on celebrities, which restricted their range of points. They gave relevant examples, however, which were usually well-used to support their argument. Celebrities such as Kerry Katona, Katie Price, Britney Spears and Amy Winehouse featured heavily and most candidates analysed the impact of press intrusion on their lives, highlighting the difference between those that court publicity and those that are just trying to “do their job”.

Better responses spent time discussing the concept of “right to know”, usually making reference to other human rights and concluding that we only have a right to know about others’ lives when it is harmful to or affects our own lives.

The more successful responses applied a wider interpretation to the term, “those in the public eye”, including those in the spotlight for reasons other than celebrity status, such as criminal activity, politics, achievement or personal tragedy. For example, the case of Madeleine McCann was discussed from two perspectives: the way the family used the press in their search for their daughter and the way the press turned on the parents with

judgements and accusations of their part in Madeleine's disappearance. This example was often linked to the Leveson Inquiry and the ethical issues surrounding phone hacking of people in the public eye.

The least successful answers were too generic with no references to specific cases or people. These tended to be repetitious of the right to privacy, a point which is contained in the question. Generic responses were, however, reasonably well balanced in terms of the rights of individuals to have a private life, and their responsibilities to act as good role models, especially to young people. Most students offered pertinent examples of both admirable and irresponsible behaviour, such as Kate Middleton and Ryan Giggs respectively. The majority of students showed little depth of understanding of the value of privacy, or of why a lack of privacy might impinge on people's well-being.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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