

## Candidate 1 evidence

### Discursive Essay

#### Technology: our servant or master?

The prolific use of technology can be seen as helping us with things like homework through quick access to information but it can also be looked at as changing family life and communication dramatically and taking over our lives by invading our privacy.

Technology affects communication. There are lots of different ways in which you can communicate through technology: texting, social media, facetime, skype, etc. There are many advantages to using technology for communication, the main one being that it gives you access to anyone around the world for free if you have a phone that is topped up or has a contract. The technology is also instant as you can send someone on the other side of the world a message at the click of a button and probably get an immediate reply. There are down sides to communication through technology, however: people pretending to be someone they're not and talking to a teenager through social media. Teenagers are very vulnerable to people like this. Teenagers always have a lot of free time to chat and play games online, but through their phones and other technological devices they can access anything online without parents' close supervision.

The web isn't policed, so young teenagers can see anything they want to, even if it is not suitable for them. It's very hard for parents to put blocks on what their children are viewing on the internet because the process is so complicated, so underage children could potentially see anything. They can also play games which may be rated as eighteen when they are underage but, because of parents not being able to make the internet more filtered, children can play anything they want to. Today, 97% of teenagers in the US play videogames which, according to some people, can help children with problem solving; however, violent behaviour from gamers is caused by video games.

Family life has changed because of technology and not in a good way. Now that everyone is using technology to communicate with people, there isn't as much conversation between family members especially. For example, a lot of families don't even sit at the dinner table anymore because they want to watch the television, so they eat their dinner in front of the television. Individually, family members are leading separate lives in rooms apart, each accessing a different form of technology. And yet Skype and Facetime can unite families who live apart as face-to-face communication conveys body language and tone of voice.

Social media is becoming more and more popular; almost everyone is using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram these days, meaning that if someone is not involved in any social media they are isolated from everyone else. On Twitter especially you can follow most

celebrities and see what they are doing on a daily basis, which can be good fun, but, on the other hand, some children don't understand that celebrities use things like Photoshop to beautify themselves, making them more attractive and popular, and these kids look up to celebrities, causing insecurities and anxieties, leading even to eating disorders. Children as young as five years old are being treated for severe anorexia after becoming obsessed with their body image. Thirty-seven percent of girls aged fourteen to fifteen years old and 40% aged sixteen perceived themselves as too fat. On sites such as Facebook, cyber-bullying can occur-this is when someone is bullied without any face-to-face contact and it can be as serious as bullying someone physically. In February 2014, a 14 year old girl from Italy was sent death threats over a website called ask.fm, which is where everyone can write to you anonymously saying whatever they want. The teenager had gone on the chat site and poured her heart out after breaking up with her boyfriend but, instead of sympathy the un-named youngster faced an avalanche of abuse by trolls telling her, "Kill yourself", "Nobody wants you" and "You are not normal". Hannah Smith was then found hanged in her bedroom in the family home in August last year.<sup>1</sup> Young people especially are growing up constantly comparing themselves with their peers and idols and I think that more young people are depressed as a result of this.

You can store an unimaginable amount of information online such as: music, games, apps, photos. A celebrity called Jennifer Lawrence had nude photos leaked online last

year through an app called iCloud, which stores all the photos you take on your phone.<sup>2</sup> The photos went viral which emphasises the serious repercussions of storing private information on the internet. On the plus side, even if you lose or break your phone, you can back up all of this information on a computer or memory stick so that you don't lose it all. However, downloading all these apps, leaves an online footprint which could be seen as an invasion of privacy, and advertisers tempt us with more of the products we like. When going for an interview, the interviewer may look at your Facebook page to see what you do in your spare time and, if you can't make your page private, they might see things you don't want them to. By putting all of your personal information online, thieves could even find a way to steal your bank details. We have sacrificed our privacy by putting all information about ourselves on the internet. People may willingly be choosing to do this because they want to go along with the crowd and are too scared to opt out.

Another main disadvantage of the constant use of technology is the distraction it causes, in particular to teenagers who do their homework in front of the television, with their phone in their hand or with earplugs in through their iPod. This habit could carry on into class, causing the student to not learn anything at school.

Fewer teenagers, especially, read books or newspapers anymore - the down side of you being able to check everything on your phone or gadget. Because we only read small

extracts of information from the internet on our phones, instead of extended pieces of writing are we are losing our concentration, or is our focus just changing to absorb smaller, less extended amounts of information but in huge quantities?

Overall, I believe that technology benefits our way of living; we can do things on our gadgets which we would have never imagined doing ten years ago. In short, we rely on technology and where would we be without it?

### References

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/hannah-smith-case-mps-call-3140148>

<sup>2</sup> [www.celebuzz.com](http://www.celebuzz.com)

Word Count: 1092

## Candidate 2 evidence

### There's No Place Like Home School...

Learning intention: to be able to enjoy learning in a non-pressurised environment.

Is the stereotypical formal education really the only way to a child's success? Our culture is so tangled in the acceptance of stereotypes. People in modern day society should be open-minded and accept different approaches to education. Many so-called educational experts claim home schooling is a selfish, substandard form of learning. I – on the other hand – disagree. Home schooling widens the opportunity for children to gain an education at a pace and using a method that suits them. Is this a harmful opinion?

Stress, pressure, anxiety. These are the feelings children will rarely experience when learning in the comfort and familiarity of home. Every single human being in this universe deserves the right to have freedom. School is a set structure where each reluctant pupil must follow procedures from bell to bell no matter their opinion. Home schooling allows children to experience a real feeling of freedom, with their lives not revolving around school hours, homework, work overload and continuous commands. Children can strive to live their lives according to what works for them by experiencing a way of learning which is enjoyable, motivating and thrilling. As a result of this educational approach, children are healthier, happier and therefore hardworking. Sounds like the perfect qualities to a successful learner surely. It has been proven that 55% of teenagers who are home schooled get the optimal amount of sleep compared to only 24.5% of teenagers who attend public and private schools.[1] This emphatically proves the negative impact school can have on those individuals' health. So the question is; why has school become the centre of the educational community? Questions remain unanswered (just like everyday questions in learning). In a study carried out by Dr. Brian D. Ray, President of the National Home Education Research Institute in the USA, he contacted respondents who had been home schooled children. It was reported that 59% said that they were very happy with life whilst being educated at home (in comparison to the general U.S. population who had been educated in a formal school environment, at 27.6%).[2] It has been a battle for parents to fight for their children to be content with life and this shows that home schooling may very well be a solution to help achieve this goal.

A key element which home schooling scores highly on, is that education is specific to the child (no waiting for classmates to catch up on your mastered work, nor any of this falling behind in class). Homeschooling allows children to expand their learning due to their personal and educational needs being recognised. But in a school environment children will always have to proceed at the same pace as their classmates. Why? Every single person works differently and thinks differently – so how does that make it acceptable to all work in the same manner? Learning at home overcomes this issue. The home educator has the opportunity to assess their learner's strengths, weaknesses and learning styles with the addition of identifying their personal interests in life. A Canadian Study which was reported in The Canadian Journal of Behavioural Health followed an investigation onto the intelligence of children taught at home as opposed to those at school. The investigation covered 74 willing young candidates, with 37 attending public school and 37 being home

schooled. The results stated that “while public school kids were tested at grade levels, home schooled children are far above grade level. Generally, home schooled children would perform at least half a grade ahead when it came to math and two grades ahead when it came to reading.”[3]

Let us consider the benefits which home schooling brings. Motivation. This is the key that children can grasp as they learn at the pace that suits them. Children are more willing to put consistent effort into learning that is tailored to them. An experimental study was carried out in America when a group of pupils and teachers at Kindergarten up to grade three were appointed at random to three types of class within the school: a small class (merely being 17 pupils), a regular class and finally a large class with a teacher-aide. It was stated that “In brief, the researchers found that in both reading and maths, pupils in small classes performed significantly better than pupils in regular classes”.[4] Just take a second to imagine the statistics on one to one. Should home schooling therefore not be better for children’s education?

Every single person’s life revolves around experience and despite objector’s views, home schooling enables children to learn through everyday experiences in different environments rather than just a formal school setting. They can learn maths and arithmetic during shopping trips, learn about nature and geography through walks in the park and countryside and beach exploration, learn about history through visits to castles and other places of historic interest and learn about caring for others through visits to sick or disabled relatives and friends in their homes or hospitals. There are those people who would object to this and point to the fact that children who attend school gain these experiences as well. But those children are limited and always have that timescale. Life experiences are central to home school education and will make children learn to grow up with the benefit of these experiences. Furthermore according to a home school blog, statistics for adults who were home schooled show that 88% say home schooling did not limit educational opportunities and furthermore 92% state that homeschooling was an advantage to them as an adult.[5] Home schooling opportunities may be the road to success.

Sure enough, school does allow children to socialise daily with members of the same species – groupings being of age, personality and in the expected way. The core of objections to home schooling is that it permanently inhibits the child’s social skills. Those people protest that home educated children are limited in their interaction with children their own age. This argument may very well be true, but this leads to the truth. The truth is that these *equal* children learn to socialize with people, people of all ages. Those meaningless claims that home schooled children are locked away behind closed doors 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, are false. The doors are wide open. Dr. Brian D. Ray recorded that home schooled students’ are on average involved in outside activities at 5.2 activities per child compared to children educated in a formal school environment and such activities include: volunteer work, sports and music classes.[6] School staff go on and on at innocent young pupils to get involved in ‘extracurricular activities’ in order for them to be successful with life. Well, home schooled children may be that significant leap ahead.

I very much support the approach to home schooling. As one who was once home schooled through to primary 6, I understand the qualities that home schooling brings. It’s not just

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about learning facts to make you intelligent, but it's the little puzzles in life that can make you more successful. Being home schooled not only allowed me to learn in a place where I was comfortable and safe, but it also allowed me to appreciate the little solutions to huge problems. A personal example is that I was able to help care for my Grandpa while he asked me problems to maths questions, rather than just reading about 'nursing' in books behind a desk and being forced to imagine what it would be like in a real life situation.

There is no place like home. No place like home schooling, to become an intelligent individual.

*Word count: 1,274 words*

*Acknowledgements:*

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*[4] - [http://www.classsizeresearch.org.uk/cs\\_psychology](http://www.classsizeresearch.org.uk/cs_psychology)*

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## Candidate 3 evidence

### Plastic Lives

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The plastic bubble was burst in Scotland of the 20th of October 2014 with the introduction of a mandatory plastic bag charge in a bid to tackle Scotland's litter problem. A staggering amount of 1 trillion plastic bags are used world-wide each year. Plastic bags blowing in the wind are a dishearteningly familiar sight – and one with environmental repercussions, taking up to hundreds of years to decompose. They often end up in water courses and are catastrophic when they reach the marine environment. Each year Scotland, alone, currently works its way through more than 800 million bags - that's more bags per head than England, Wales or Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom as a whole gives out at least nine billion plastic bags per annum. This charge is a starting point in raising awareness of the impact our presence is creating in our world.

We cannot ignore the devastating effect discarded plastic carrier bags, are having on the marine life and wildlife. Note that these bags never biodegrade, but they do breakdown and as they do toxic additives are released into the environment. According to the Los Angeles Times one of the most common items found on California's beaches are plastic bags, discarded as litter. Rain water or even a light gentle breeze will flush them through storm drains or directly to lochs, streams and rivers that lead to the ocean. There is no doubt that they will eventually find seawater endangering the aquatic life. Consequently, we are harming our own food supply. Few shoppers stop to consider that disposable plastic bags have an overwhelming impact on marine animals such as whales, seals, sea birds and turtles. More than 100,000 animals die every year after ingesting or becoming entangled in them. "As the oceans choke on plastic so do the whales." In August 2008, a sperm whale washed up dead on the beach near Point Reyes, California, with 450 pounds of fishing net, rope, and plastic bags found in its stomach. In March of this year a 10-meter-long dead sperm whale that washed up on Spain's South Coast had swallowed 59 different plastic items amounting to a total of 17 kilograms. The plastic interfered with the animal's food intake and eventually blocked the digestive system ultimately leading to its death. These are not isolated incidents. Starting in 1996 in America, more than 1 billion single-use plastic bags were given out free of charge every day. In 2009 the U.S. International Trade Commission reported that 102 billion plastic bags were used in the U.S. that year. How many whales have died as a result?

It is evident that change is occurring which is vital in maintaining our environment and also reducing our carbon footprint. We must show responsiveness to counteract any negative reactions to our choices thus preventing further destruction to our fragile eco-system. The European Parliament aims to "slash the use [of plastic bags] by 80% by 2025 or follow the lead of Italy and ban them all together". Already with the introduction of the charge in Scotland, Asda has seen a 90% reduction in the use of plastic bags and close behind Morrison's has seen an 80% drop. Before the tax, Ireland found that plastic bags made up almost 5% of visible litter whereas now it has dropped to less than an astounding 1%. Wales became the first part of the UK to introduce a minimum charge for single-use carrier bags in 2011, followed by Northern Ireland last year. As part of a study in 2012 to document the impact of the 5p charge in Wales it found that waste has reduced by 34% and also benefits charity by 30%. Another great example is Denmark, which introduced a charge in 2003, and now has the lowest plastic bag use in Europe, using four plastic bags per person per year.

New legislation imposed by the Scottish government mandates all retailers to charge a minimum of 5p per single-use carrier bag given out to customers. However, what are the reasons behind the charge? Does this affect retailers? Where does the money go and exactly which bags will the customers pay for? Individual businesses are free to choose what to do with the revenue. The government is gently encouraging retailers to donate the profits to

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good causes, "particularly ones that benefit the environment". Zero Waste Scotland have signed up 160 retailers to their "Carrier Bag Commitment", meaning they have agreed to donate the proceeds to good causes, and report on how many bags they have sold and how they've used the money. Marks and Spencer's, The Co-Operative Group and Superdry are among those who have committed. These companies have invested in reusable carrier bags to encourage the reduction of our throwaway habits and their hook is 'Bag for Life' meaning they will replace the bag free of charge if it breaks. Additionally the majority of the public is embracing this trend and thus far we have seen an environmental improvement.

Unfortunately many Scottish citizens view this as an attack on the working class families to further impoverish their already stretched budgets thus making more profit for the large band of hypermarkets. However, this point is largely incorrect, while fixed taxes and fees do represent a higher relative cost to those on lower incomes this falls most heavily on those who fail to use reusable bags. After an initial purchase of one or more bags for life the consumer need never pay again.

If plastic bags were as detrimental to the environment as claimed then they would be banned. The government have the power to enforce laws in aid of public safety and health; therefore it would appear logical for them to ban the use of plastic bags equivalent to the drink driving ban. Ultimately manufacturing industries would suffer creating a loss of jobs and lost revenues for towns and cities. In the United States, the plastics industry accounts for more than \$374 billion dollars in annual shipments and directly employs nearly 900 thousand people. While this may have a negative impact on the economy, though this has yet to be demonstrated, in previous cases the short-sighted use of resources in an environmentally destructive way may result in more long term damage to the economy and will need to end eventually; by taking pro-active action the damage may be mitigated. Especially as the European parliament is taking steps towards this, and may later seek to use punitive measures to elicit the same change in behaviour. It is also worth noting that the intention is not presently to stop the use of plastic bags but to curtail the levels of use.

Think of it as a good deed - a shopper uses a disposable bag on average for just minutes whilst the toll on the environment lasts for decades.

Overall, I think it is necessary to have this 5p carrier bag charge in place: not only does it force the public to develop an awareness to the dangers of plastic and the detrimental effects it has on the sea life and land animals, but also it allows us to become involved in charity. I agree that it is difficult to change habits although I, certainly, would prefer not to live in a rubbish filled society. Use a plastic bag and become the murderer of precious and valuable species to the ocean's evolution and maintenance or use the environmentally friendly bags and become a 'preserver'. Consequently while a step in the right direction it would seem there is considerable work still to be done. Let's take charge and ensure that the world we grew up in is there for the future generation.

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Word count: 1277

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## Candidate 4 evidence

Higher English Folio of Writing

Essay 1: Broadly Creative

Title: Lost but not forgotten

Number of words

1289

### Lost but not forgotten -

The old man strode purposefully through the rows of neatly lined graves stones. This was his first time back on French soil, and it was one that he had long dreaded. He slowly advanced towards the large stone monument towering in the midst of the graveyard which wore the honours of the brave soldiers whose bodies had never been found. Its surface was worn down by the harsh coastal weather where the prevailing winds had penetrated, creating sharp cracks, dressing it in poorly healed battle scars from previous winters, reflective of the lost souls it sought to represent. The base of the monument, had been better maintained where the assembled names had united, row upon row, continuing their fight together against the slow but inevitable erosion, protecting the engraved bolded lettering. The old man hung his head in front of the monument in solemn reflection, then slowly with anticipation, raised his gaze, to scan the list of names. His interest was in finding a name, one very special name that had haunted him for almost 70 years. While excited at the prospect of finding it, he remained terrified of the thought of it not being there, and his wandering eyes frequently became entangled and lost amongst the maze of lettering. His gaze was suddenly frozen, transfixed on a name, a soldier, a lost comrade. His concentration momentary halted and the names started to blur, as the increasing sound of violent explosions began to fill his mind as past memories stirred unbridled inside of him.

It was September 1916, on the Western Front, and military progress had all since dissolved into a cruel and bloody standoff: each side making an advance from their trenches only to be mercilessly cut down by the destructive machinery of war. His own advance had started only minutes before and already was in disarray with the air laden with the smell of cordite and the screams of his comrades torn apart by the gunfire and explosions. After diving into a newly formed crater for safety he had heard the muffled retreat bugle being signaled but the relentless and rampaging machine gun rattling had him trapped. Alone, face down in the mud, the smoke and charred air suffocated him, while his stiff leather boots sunk further into the dark slouching ground. His heart thumped in his chest, his blood raced through his veins and he wheezed like an asthmatic child. The burning explosions blasted overhead, with the dirt erupting around him, attacking his eyes and blinding his vision. His throat clogged up as he choked on the smoke and dust circling in a spiral around him. With his eyesight limited to less than twenty yards in front, he could no longer see the safety of his own lines somewhere behind him. He was lost in no-man's land. He felt like a coward - too scared to move onward, too scared to fight, too scared to die.

The realization of his isolation pierced his frightened stupor and he forced himself out of the hole in an attempt to get back to safety and started to wade through the dark grey blur. Panicked, with sweat dripping off his back, he gagged at the smell of rotting carcasses surrounding him from earlier battles - a mess of bodies previously buried in the soft ground had been re-awoken by shellfire. This carnage was once soldiers, once proud men, and he feared it would not be long till he joined them. Sharp grenades continued to flash not more than 100

yards away as the enemy took advantage of the retreat. If he took a step forward he could be gone forever. Dead. Forgotten.

Stumbling past the debris of bodies devastating the landscape, he was disturbed by the whispered cry of a ghostly figure lying motionless.

“Hello Jock...am I glad to see you!”

Jock stared almost in disbelief at the familiar face which masked the crumpled and broken body. It was Albert Monteith, one of the original platoon members from his training days in England. His thick eyebrows, now obscured in dirt, rose producing large, defined, wrinkles across his filthy forehead, thick with sweat, his eyes reddened as he tried in vain to mask the pain.

“I’m feeling bad”

Flinging his rifle to the ground he knelt beside the man, removing his poorly-fitted steel helmet. The man’s face was marked with smears of dried blood and the matting of wet blood down the length of his uniform led to a gaping wound. He grabbed Albert’s arms, which felt frail and weak and tilted him to get a better look at his clearly fatal wound but this only served to produce desperate wails and whimpering. In the gloom Jock saw black fragments dispersed deep into the flesh. His skin had been ripped open, with his organs held in only by the tightness of his belt. His reward for bravely holding onto life, was agonizing pain and loneliness.

He couldn’t let Albert die here, couldn’t leave him behind. The mud would soon consume him. Even now the sides of the crater were slipping. He’d never be found; his body would end up as flesh picked over by the circling crows, eradicated from memory, rather than being returned to his loving family to mourn.

Crouching down to grab his limp hand, Jock draped it round his neck, causing intense burning in his shoulders. Albert’s unresponsive body slouched against his side, making progress near impossible. Every step taken, amplified the dying man’s pain. Time after time the weight of this burden slid off his shoulder, flopping motionless into a puddle filled with mud and disease. If only he had help, an extra hand, to carry this weight. However no help would come as sniper fire continued to whistle overhead. The muffled rumble of the wind smothered the calls of the enemy troops who were being readied to advance on their position. Dragging him behind like a slaughtered animal’s carcass, he made little progress. Eventually Albert could take no more and thumped on his shoulder and pleaded hopelessly

, “Put me down, put me down...I’d rather die...I’d rather die”.

“Listen...if I leave you here Albert, you’ll never be found. Come on let’s have another go.”

Together they rose to continue their treacherous path through craters but once again Albert could not hold his own weight and finally collapsed, resigned to his fate.

Jock's fatigue was suddenly interrupted by the barking orders of the enemy officers leading their men into certain death. With the chattering of the advancing troops and the on-coming drilling of the machine-gun fire, it was hopeless, there being little option but to leave Albert behind. Alone; lost and forgotten, Albert would be devoured by no-man's land. No body to remember, no body to grieve, no body to bury. Despite the frustration and despair, he turned his back on Albert and started his own desperate retreat to the safety of his trenches, as the realisation of his betrayal infected his thoughts.

The faded regimental flag rippled in the light winds as it stood guard over the war cemetery's treasured graves. The blur of the names on the central monument had once again focused into one, the only one that mattered to him. This name was responsible for the guilt that had grown within him like a cancer. His lungs expanded with cool air, lifting his heavy chest weighted down with medals worn proudly above his left breast. As he exhaled however, his expelled air carried also the weight of guilt and regret which had imprisoned him for all these years. A great relief washed over him and with a lifting of his unburdened heart, his worn eyes brightened. Albert had been found. He had been remembered.

**Word Count - 1289**

## Candidate 5 evidence

Scarred

Erich

*The metal machine beeped, slowly and steadily. On the plain white death bed lay the scarred and wasted body of an elderly man.*

I was 18. Young, fit and ready to serve my country.

Men were needed: men to eradicate the plague which had manifested itself in our poor country. The plague that had stolen, blamed and wrecked the innocent but begged for forgiveness when it was too late. Something had to be done. We had no money, no defences, and little food. Something had to be done to restore our country to its former health.

Then they came.

Like an engine of development, a bank of promises. Promises of a cure.

*The machine picked up speed.*

There was little opposition, we needed them and they needed us in order to make our country great again. Who would deny an answer to their problems? All we had to do was give them the chance. The results were immediate. I signed up; I had to be a part of this, a part of history. We wanted the illness which had attacked our poor country removed.

And I was grateful. I was proud. I took from them what they had stolen from us.

Freedom.

I threw them into pits, made them work, and made them suffer. They would repent for what they had done. And we would ensure it would never happen again.

Justice.

Justice for those who wanted harmony in our country.

*A hacking sound echoed throughout the white, cold room*

But one of them, one of the vermin thought that he could outsmart us. Thought he could escape. But he was wrong. He left a scar on my face; I shot him immediately. I did what I wanted to them. We were brave. Their death was good. Revenge felt right.

I helped restore justice to our country, if only for a brief time. I was part of the parade of doctors who saw our country through the worst of its sorrows.

I served my country. The ones who regret their actions, who deny their involvement are weak. They are part of the problem. I watched many of the strong men quiver in their seats when interrogated. But not me, I was quick. Intelligent. I got away. Got away only to reside in a weak country that I was ashamed of.

I had watched the birth of the movement and witnessed its death. I fled. Not out of weakness, but by force. I couldn't be in my great country and watch it slowly die.

The day the war finished marked the condemnation of our once great nation. I bided my time, hoping for a revival of our work. I pretended to be an ordinary citizen, a refugee. I hid but the war was never over in my mind.

*The machine sped on*

Our job is not finished.

The inferior races, prospering while we, the strong willed and highly advanced people suffered. I had to flee, hide, but my hatred and resentment grew stronger every day.

And lying here, with death approaching...

*Beep*

Do I regret my choices?

*Beep*

The people I killed?

*Beep*

Do I wish to apologise to the race I wanted eliminated from existence?

No.

*The machine stopped.*

### **Esther**

Papa had been taken first.

The wind had roared on that devastating night. In they marched. No warning. No remorse. They had beaten him to within an inch of his life outside of our house. He had been left out there, to die alone.

They came for us next.

The blue eyed monsters. They blamed us for the fall of the country and blamed us for problems that we too suffered. The majority were being attacked for acts of the minority.

They had been brainwashed.

We were thrown onto the trains. The smell of fear was overpowering. We had heard the threats. We knew what was coming.

My yellow star blazed from my arm. The only comfort I had was that I had been strong. I had stood by my family, my beliefs and did not hide. I was proud of who I was. These soldiers surely could not have that. Could not have pride. Not after the deeds they had carried out.

So many people suffered with us: old and young; men and women; children and babies.

No one deserved to be there.

Mama squeezed my hand on that night. She whispered that everything would be good. We would soon be free. She had always been that way, comforting and warm. However, we had known that her words were lies.

We would be trapped. Shaved. Stripped. Silenced...

I lost count of the many people who had died on that first night.

Lined up and shot.

Mama and I were separated that night. I never saw her again. Hundreds of us were thrown into rooms with the capacity to hold only a few. I knew I had to survive. For her. For my father. I worked, and I suffered immense pain. I do remember one of them, one of the soldiers more clearly than the rest. He was completely ruthless. One of us had tried to escape, had clawed the face of this soldier before he was shot in front of us. While his death had been in vain, he had left a mark on the soldier. One act of rebellion that would hopefully remind the soldier for all he had done. The soldier had a scar, but he would heal. What we suffered would leave an everlasting mark on not just us, but on humanity.

The pain of the starvation, the pain of the workload and the pain of watching others die was indescribable. I brushed arms with death a number of times. I felt it wrap me in a tight embrace, but I rose and I lived. I saw things I cannot speak of but these horrors must be shared to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Everything I fought for led me to this day, days where I can speak of the horrors, educate others, and prevent another atrocity like this from happening again.

We can choose to dwell on the past, or we can choose to ignore it. But what we cannot do, what we cannot allow to happen is let the past repeat itself.

I have the power of words. The power of being on the right side of an unjust war. Those soldiers do not have that. Some have regret and some have remorse. But the only regret some have is regret that more of us were not killed. What defines them is who wishes they had killed more of us and who wishes they had no part in any of it. Seeing many of the soldiers being imprisoned gives a sense of relief. However, many are still free.

But I can say, from a girl who lost so much to a woman who has gained so much wisdom, when asked if I could ever forgive what was done to my people. My answer is simple. There is no choice

I must.

Word count - 1184

## Candidate 6 evidence

### Can I be Bothered?

Can I be bothered? This is a question that has a habit of floating hazily through my mind. So far, my laziness has not had a major impact, but I fear the day of reckoning is looming.

In my latest report, my Maths teacher seems to be hinting politely at me picking up the pace a little: 'My laidback approach to his studies provides an element of tranquility in the class'. Thanks to my laziness, I like to think I am preserving some calm, like the 'boy ... on the burning deck', when all around me are teetering on the brink of hysteria, ready to plummet into the darkest depths at the first setback. Admittedly the aforementioned 'boy' stayed at his post not through laziness, but through a strong sense of duty, and paid with his life. That might be taking it a little too far. However, there are so many angst-ridden teenagers suffering from pre-exam stress, it helps to redress the balance to have someone languorously loafing, exuding an air of serenity. How does she know that underneath the calm exterior I am not a bag of nerves? Okay, perhaps I'm not, but I do know that I need to follow her advice and that my procrastination must end soon if I am 'to realise my full potential'. Unfortunately, these sentiments are being echoed by my chemistry teacher who is advising that I am 'capable of more and must start by being more organised.' The sad fact is that she's right.

This advice is also being bandied around at home. Commonly aired phrases are, 'You've got the ability but you need to develop more staying power'. On the other hand, I am frequently heard to say, 'Can I have a break now?' Unlike the stalwart boy in the poem, I'm all too ready to abandon my post. My mum has learned to keep a whip at hand, especially as I recently burned the midnight oil (and beyond) completing a history essay. Fair credit to me, I do get things handed in on time. Perhaps my chemistry teacher's right, and I do have timing issues. Perhaps I could cash in on this and get extra time in my exams...

Recently I have gone down the route of advising my mum that I have ADHD, which is what is preventing me from applying myself. She's having none of it. Instead she is pointing a stern finger at the Nutella jar, the Coco Pops box and the crisps stash. She seems to think that the much-maligned E-numbers might be playing a part in my hyperactivity. Confession time. I do consume vast numbers of 'Hoobalicious' treats (more about 'The Hoobs' to follow shortly). In fact, now I think about it, my increased snack intake may well be one of my many work avoidance tactics.

Undeniably there has been a sea change. As a small boy, I rose before the rest of the household, helped myself to some cereal and popped on 'The Hoobs'. Believe me, you have to be an early bird to beat my dad who is up insanely early. By the way, if my cultural allusion to 'The Hoobs' has got you wondering, they are luridly coloured puppets with crazy hair who used to feature on Channel 4's popular 06:00-07:00 slot. In fact, I have just been vindicated (yes, I've just taken

a few minutes out to revisit my old friends) having discovered that they are BAFTA award winning Hoobs! I was discerning even then. I am also astonished to discover they have been axed! On further reflection, it has occurred to me that in spite of rising with the lark, I was not exactly throwing myself into an energetic pursuit, settling myself on the sofa with some Shreddies.

It has also occurred to me that my reputation for being ever so slightly chilled set in quite early: on sleepovers I was the first to succumb to sleep. The word 'sleepover' is surely an oxymoron if ever there was one. For most children it meant a crazed night of too many E-numbers, but in my case, I did what it says on the tin and slept over...

Back to the sofa. The spot from which I once watched the Hoobs has now become my football management position. Why stand on a cold touchline when you can sink into the warm embrace of a sofa? Sadly, my waistline is increasing in keeping with my managerial reputation (or is that just the snack habit?). 'FIFA' is now taking up an inordinate amount of my time, with virtual football substituting for the beautiful game.

I loved football. I even enjoyed playing in driving wind and rain; it's just as well, living in a wet and windy region of Scotland. However, you've guessed it: having worked my way through a range of clubs that folded, or failed; having made the big time by finally being offered a place in a decent team, I took the easy option. The decent team had high expectations of its players: two training sessions a week, three private jogs and summer fitness camps to boot! These grueling conditions weren't for me. I quit. Okay, I wasn't going to be the next Pelé and I wasn't even going to be signed for £100,000 but I might have enjoyed playing for a good team. Sadly, the latest development in my football career is that my mum has shown me the red card as far as FIFA is concerned. In all fairness I was issued with more than one yellow card, and ignored all of the warnings. It looks like my managerial career is on hold for the time being.

Don't get me wrong. In spite of my well-honed ability to conserve energy, I do have ambition. It's just that I am directing my efforts and using my time efficiently. This is a good business model. I appreciate I may have created a bad impression of myself, but that isn't the whole story. I hold my hands up to being a trifle lazy, but perhaps I'm just not getting enough sleep: everyone knows that teenagers need a huge amount of sleep. A little more research has just revealed that to function at optimum levels, teens need over nine hours of sleep a night. Maybe this is my problem?

This leads neatly into getting up in the morning. Being ready on time is not a skill I have mastered yet. You might be surprised to hear that I have a morning paper round, but you won't be surprised to hear that I sleep through my alarm, through my dad's increasingly aggressive wake up calls and through my own tiny internal voice of conscience. However, I am dependable and never let my boss down. Clearly a good work ethic does exist and this might just see me through my exams (and hopefully my folio too!). A recent visit from my big sister, who is a model student at university, has further focused my efforts.

My sister, often inadvertently referred to as 'mum' because of her bossy nature, has set the bar high. I have to confess to being a tiny bit competitive and perhaps this will be my saving grace. I'm done with hearing about her 'A' grades and her stoical approach to her studying. She's thrown down the gauntlet and it's time to take up the mantle. It's time to act. My lazy days are over...

Anyway, the Nutella is calling and FIFA awaits. I'd like to conclude my essay with one final reference to my old friends, the Hoobs, and celebrate with their congratulatory chant: "Hoobledoop-Hoobledoop-Whoop-Whoop-Whoop!"

## Candidate 7 evidence

### The Claus of a Predator

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It's the most wonderful time of the year – a time to relax with family and friends, to rock around the Christmas tree and deck the halls with our tattered tinsel and crumpled crepe paper. As we hear those sleigh bells ring-a-ling and warm our hands on crackling Yule-log fires, let us not forget the serious issues. For too long, we have let festive spirit and materialistic desire distract us from what is important. For too long, we have forgiven and even celebrated one who breaks national and international law alike. We cannot continue in our complacency. Let us shake off the ghosts of Christmas past, and move forward into a future of equality and cheer! We must cast aside our carols and our mince pies, and arrest this monster, the one who calls himself "Santa Claus", once and for all.

Of all the heinous acts that have landed this "saint" on the naughty list, one stands out for its sheer depravity. As we peruse the aisles of crowded stores in search of that perfect gift for a loved one, it is shameful how little we stop to think about the conditions that those who stitched together granny's new scarf or brother's woollen socks may have endured. While the blind eye we turn towards sweat shops is truly unacceptable, we are at least slowly learning that no human should ever have to endure what many factory workers do. Yet we remain ignorant of the plight of the non-humans involved in making the tokens that this tyrant leaves under our trees. Santa leaves billions of gifts in our homes every year, but they don't just magically appear. Instead, it is up to his legions of elven slaves to go through the painstaking, blister-inducing process of crafting toys for the world's children. To allow for healthy working hours, he would need an army the size of a small country! We can only imagine the conditions inside the grotto – are there thousands of pointy-eared prisoners crammed into rooms too small to hang mistletoe in? Or are there smaller numbers, forced to work day and night until their tiny fingers blister and break? No matter what the truth, the crimes against elf-kind that are going on under our noses cannot be allowed to continue.

Somehow, for this cruel conspirator, the atrocities occurring in his home year-round are not bad enough. Instead, this villain must add to his record with an annual trip, a world tour of crime and cruelty. Even the way he travels is awful. In the twenty-first century, we are past the point where animal cruelty is seen as in any way acceptable. Surely there is no crueller torture for a beast than to have to drag a heavy sleigh, full to overflowing with toys and perched upon by a man who is not exactly light, for hour after hour? Arctic sleds are one thing, but the sheer weight, speed and time involved in this trip make it a *bona fide* death sentence for whatever animal feels the tug of Santa's reins. What makes this even worse is the type of animal that he uses – how many flying reindeer can we name, except those who undergo this back-breaking endeavour? We can only assume that these magical creatures are the last of their kind, being driven to extinction by the disgusting neglect of Father Christmas.

The flight path that he takes is also in complete violation of international law. Sure, flying from Scotland to England without a passport is okay, but from the North Pole to South Africa? Santa seems to work under the assumption that a brightly coloured sleigh and some jingle bells are enough to allow him to completely disregard the world's migration conventions. Passport control and border guards exist for a number of excellent reasons – chief among them, is keeping shady characters like this one from spreading their mischief globally. Ignore these important regulations, hopping from country to country without giving any indication to the authorities as to your whereabouts, undermines national security and endangers international relations – all so that Santa can put some presents under trees!

### The Claus of a Predator

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Once he arrives at children's houses he commits his most blatant crimes. Our homes are our castles, our fortresses against the perils of the outside world. Companies make big money developing advanced security systems to allow us to feel safe and protected as we sleep. Breaking and entering, sneaking past a home's defences and infringing on the privacy of its residents, is a crime that cannot go unpunished. Why is he the only person in the world who gets away with such a gross violation of the trust and safety of people around the world? One house break-in is a crime; thousands upon thousands, every year for centuries, is an abomination. We know this is wrong, we bring our children up not to talk to strangers and to shut their doors behind them, but we continue to act as if an old man forcing his way into our houses (and into our children's bedrooms!) is somehow acceptable.

As he leaves the buildings he cannot resist committing at least one disgusting act of theft – helping himself to whatever drink and biscuits he can pilfer before he staggers back to his sleigh to begin the process again. It may only be milk and cookies that he snaffles in some houses, but others are far more dangerous – how many times must he gulp down a glass of single malt before getting back into his sleigh? The sheer recklessness of this man – already clearly old enough to be a danger behind the reins anyway – allowing himself to drive through our night skies with the thick haze of drunkenness clouding his vision and slowing his reflexes is appalling. Does old St. Nick even have the decency to let air traffic control know that there will be an extra vehicle in the air that night? Of course not! Any other pilot exhibiting such foolhardy behaviour would be tracked down and locked away immediately – for everyone's safety. Why are we allowing this selfish fool to endanger the lives of innocent people? It can't go on.

Even if the horrendous extent of Father Christmas' crimes were not clear, his profile alone is enough to cause suspicion. This is a man who lives in disguise – why would a saint from what is now Turkey consistently be portrayed as an Anglo-Saxon white man in the media, unless he was hiding his true appearance? Clearly, he is worried that his dastardly deeds will catch up with him and is ready to make a quick getaway. In fact, his whole look is designed to allow him to slip away if he needs to – an easily shaved beard, weight that can be shed with diet and exercise, a bright red suit (originally green, presumably swapped when someone got too close to uncovering his nefarious schemes) to be swapped with jeans and a shirt at a moment's notice. What colour are Santa's eyes? What shape is his nose? We don't know – and that's just the way he wants it.

We are left with a choice: do we sit back in our Christmas-time complacency, enjoying our eggnog and our mince pies in blissful ignorance; or do we fight? We have the opportunity to make a difference; to make this The First Noel free from the corruption of a terrifying tyrant! We can take Christmas back! It's the most wonderful time of the year – to take a stand.

## Candidate 8 evidence

### Let Me Count the Ways Imaginative Writing by

How many birds in a flock? Mair than ye kin count! An' that's how many years Ah've bin fishing, but never wance huv Ah caught a single fish. Ah'm no' in the business ae catchin' fish, ye see. Naw! Ma joab is much mair difficult than that. When Ah fish, Ah fish tae catch the *stars*...

Ah remember gazin' doon upon yer bonnie wee world fae ma lofty perch way up in your sky. Ah remember when Ah could hear your world singing. Aw the sounds o' creation. It wis marvellous. Oh, the days whaur Ah wis a young lad! How Ah wid dance tae your world's sweet pibroch. Ah'd jist be jugglin' the stars, tastin' the lightning and spittin' oot aw the thunder. Oh, ma pal, *ye really* should hae seen me dauncin'! Help ma boob, Ah wis marvellous!

As fur noo? Ah've seen better days - that's fur sure. Days where there wasnae that constant creakin' noise every time Ah move; days whaur ma creased eyes didnae make folk want tae iron ma face (should they ever paye me a visit); and the remains of whit used tae be ma nicest suit wasnae in tatters. But that's whit happens, ken? Ye git auld. Wizened an' aw that.

A loat changes when ye don't watch things close enough. Ye see, Ah've lived a long, long time. Bin aroon' tae see the creation ae your bonnie planet. An' there ain't one doot in ma mind that Ah'll be aroon fir the solemn day whaur it jist ceases tae exist. No' many folk kin say that they'll live forever, an' ye will indeed be a lang time deid.

As fur me, Ah never stop sailin'. Its ma joab, ye see? Ah'm the wan tae brighten up even the bleakest and blackest ae nights oan ma precious pearl here, gliding through the darkness upon this braw shield ae light.

Tell me, how hard dae ye look at yer own night sky? Dae ye take the time tae *really* look?

Dae ye see the colours? Ah see them aw the time when Ah'm fishin' aff ae ma crescent perch. Ah watch how the blackness ae night transforms so elegantly intae the most mesmerising blue, an' gaze at how silver wind swirls itself aroon' the vast amount ae space leaving its everlasting mark - even if only fir a second. Dae ye ever see me? Reelin' in your dazzling stars? Glowing, fading then glowing again! Explodin' wae life and scattering itself across the canvas ae night like dust. Ah will tell ye this though, ye cin wrap yerself up intae a cocoon ae night's embrace. Ye cin pretend tae shield yourself way its disguise, but no matter wit, ye will never be mair exposed tae anything than when draped ain its dark blanket. Cause whaur cin you possibly hide in the darkness when ye huv been so delightfully kissed by aw the stars?

Mind you, it's right lonely up hear the best ae times. Ah don't get many visitors, ye see. The last folk that came tae visit stuck a pole through ma curved ship. Numpties! Ah don't ken whit the pole's purpose wis right enough, bit they cin awa' n bile their heads if it wis a fur sale sign! Ye canny own the moon, ye see! An' you never will. The moon is far tae bonnie wae its glorious imperfections. The way it staunds high above even your tallest mountains, so far away it's out ae yer reach. Dae you see when the moon gits tired? When she becomes pale within her own misty vail? She never stops. You folk are lucky that ye will never see her rest.

Solitary, sad and lonely... Oh, how Ah had resembled the moon!

Like Ah said, Ah don't own the moon. Ah wis chosen by it, ye see? Imperfect and flawed, Ah mirrored it. Like the moon, Ah wis tarnished, craters and holes blemished ma already crumpled skin... Bit like the moon, Ah also shined out in times ae darkness!

Well, that's whit *she* told me...

- The first time Ah met Her, Ah wis travellin' through the stars, until a noticed that Ah wasn't sailin' on the blue silk ae night anymare, bit on Ah burnt orange sky. An' in that moment, Ah swear Ah felt pity fur the stars, fur looking at nuthin' bit the moon, when the mother of light wis illuminating her warmth an' embracing all in it. Ah remember reachin' oot, trying tae grasp her rays of light. Her yellow warmth filled me from head tae toe! The way she moved wae the sky wis like a dance... She wis the sun! An' she wis radiant!

Bit jist as soon as she came, she hud tae leave. Ah watched her pulling back the curtain ae night as she soared through the sky, and Ah became jealous that Ah could no longer feel the heat ae day on my glowing ship an' that Ah knew that some folk were getting tae live in the light, whilst Ah lived in ma darkness wance mair.

Ah remember thinkin' that Ah had never seen the night look so horrifyingly beautiful. A graveyard ae stars, longing after a light it wid never feel.

Many a time Ah wid try tae catch her eye. Bit we were always movin' at different times, ye see? It made me sad, the days whaur Ah saw her. Some days she shined sae bright, bit on others she looked jist lonely. On those days the clouds were coverin' her up - making an unbreakable shield - so that even her glorious, glimmering beams ae light couldnae break through. On those days the moon would cry tears ae stars, bit even they seemed tae forget how tae shine. Ah remember how one night ma heart burst intae fiery red flames - so that on those days, I could shine enough fir us both. Some days Ah almost gave up...

Ah wis dozin' when the night sky transformed wance mare intae that sublime orange blaze. Ah could feel the warmth caressin' ma skin, an Ah jist new. My, she wis bonnie!

Sunlight poured from her veins, an' her eyes sparkled sae brightly that even the stars were dazzled by the sight. Bit Ah knew that this moment wisnae gonnae last. It wis there tae be cherished, savoured. So, we danced, an' talked, an' toasted the stars. Ah knew then that Ah had been kissed by a light so divine that Ah wid never feel the darkness ae night again. No' in the same way.

But aw too soon it wis time tae bid good morning, "Goodnight". So Ah departed wae the promise that Ah wid collect a star fir everyday that we were apart. That way, when we meet again, we kin scatter them across the sky fir aw tae see. An we will make the face o' night so fine, that aw the world will fa' in love wae it.

So, that's why Ah fish fir the stars. It's a promise. It's a hope. A covenant, ye might say, atween me an' her.

Ah've seen her many times. An' no matter how auld we become, whenever we meet again we dance an' we talk an' we bid good morning, "Goodnight". The moon still cries, and sometimes the stars forget tae shine sae bright, bit Ah jist bide ma time, waitin' fir the day when we'll meet wance mare. The day where your world will gaze in wonder at our harmonious eclipse.

How dae Ah love her? Let me count the ways... Fir Ah have night and light and the half-light. Fir all eternity...

1284 words

## Candidate 9 evidence

### Higher English - Creative writing

#### Title - Porphyria Speaks

What am I to you? Nothing but,  
A 'smiling rosy little head'?  
Your own fantasy of an innocent to corrupt?  
I told you that night after I fled  
That great gathering, abandoned all of my friends,  
And stole away into the night.  
Oh how it broke my heart to think,  
Of you alone and cold upon this winter's eve,  
With no one but the treacherous weather, the howling wind and pelting rain  
For company  
So distressed was I, so wrought  
With horror grief and pain,  
I entered in,  
The middle of the night, to find,  
My lover, what a sight! That filled my heart with sadness,  
As there you were, frozen and alone, sat still  
Upon the sofa, pale and ill,  
I ran to you my darling, won't you muse upon it? As I swept in,  
Removed my sodden hat and coat,  
And, for you, I set ablaze the logs  
That rested in the fireplace.  
The flames, crackled and sputtered out of the grate,  
Like the tongues of Satan's men, hissing and beckoning.  
Can you recall, how at once I held you,  
Called upon you? But to no avail, yet still – I persevered.  
You said no words my dear, but then I needed nothing but your presence  
To give assurance of how perfectly I loved you.  
Why, my love! Oh how I thought to myself so often

“Why surely I would love him still, were he to take my life, surely with my dying breath I would tell him I adore him so!”

And, thought I, how pure, how beautiful is our love that I might love him after such a deed!

I thought myself lucky, blessed,

And I caressed your face and laid your head upon my breast,

When suddenly, I spied, a gleam in your eyes, and soon enough

Your face lit up, as though to make it known you felt the same.

Your hand arose, wavering before you held in your grasp

A lock of my hair,

I watched, entranced, as you wove it through your fingers,

Twisting, turning, as though it were a golden serpent and you its master,

Charming it to do your bidding as it danced through your hands.

So fixated was I on these wild oscillations,

That I failed to realise, until it was too late,

It slithered around my throat, tighter and tighter until I was left,

As nothing but a corpse, a lifeless shell of myself.

I watched from across the room, confounded by what I saw,

My own body, cold and dead,

Held in your arms as you unwound that accursed creature from my neck,

And opened up my lids, to show

My blue eyes, icy as the storm that tore down trees nearby.

You raised my head to rest upon your shoulder,

Laying a kiss upon my brow,

As though to show you cared, but now,

It seems instead, you cared for nought

But safety in the knowledge I could be no man's but yours.

If only you had known, had thought to ask me of my feelings...

Alas, you did not and there we sit,

I told you we would be as one forever,

Is this how you ensured it?

546 words

## Bibliography

### Poem – Imaginative response

Porphyria's lover, Robert Browning

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175584>