

'It only takes a spark to get a fire going.' What are your views?

When broken down, this statement essentially conveys through its metaphors how a small event – 'a spark' – could inspire great change – 'a fire going'. It could have been what Martin Luther King thought of as he initiated the war against racism; Ghandi, as he fought for the freedom of India from the British Empire; and Hitler, as he stirred up the hatred of the Germans against the Jews. Unfortunately, this statement does not always translate into a positive movement. On the positive side, there are many real-life examples and inspirational stories that attest to the validity of this maxim. Martin Luther King's simple thought of "Why should I be treated differently just because of the colour of my skin?" – an emotional spark – ignited a raging inferno of passion amongst millions of Americans of different creed and colour against racism that many people today can still remember through the vibrant tone of his inspiring speeches. A fire was created so strong that even after his death, his ideals of freedom and fairness still burn brightly in most around the world as his cause is still being strongly supported around the world. As such, we can clearly see how this statement applies positively to Martin Luther King's case. Apart from <u>emotional and moral shifts</u>, Bill Gates is another compliment to this maxim. His simple thought of wanting an easier use of computer inspired him to invent Microsoft, which changed the technological scene forever. Microsoft <u>paved the way</u> for many more technological advances that place the <u>end-users</u> at the forefront, making computing as easy as eating a meal. Hence, because of Gates, the world has seen many wondrous inventions which run the world today. Just by counting how many devices you have at home serves as enough evidence to know how big of a change Gates' initial idea – a spark – has led to. However, this statement can be abused and used out of hatred and selfishness to cause catastrophe. Nazi leader Adolf Hitler used his personal hatred towards the Jews to spark a blaze of anti-semitism across Germany during World War Two which resulted in mass genocide and the torture and murder of millions of Jews. More recently, the rise of terrorism can be attributed to the same <i>modus operandi</i>. This is recognised by Singapore's defence Minister who states: "Those who distribute and spread ideals of terror are more dangerous than the ones who carry out the attacks." Terrorist group ISIS has successfully used social media to ignite sparks of hatred and extremism in many young people which leads them to carry out acts of extreme violence which has scorched this world with extreme violence and the loss of innocent lives. These two examples show the danger these 'sparks' can cast on our world. Overall the maxim has inspired many beautiful success stories around the world. However, it is our responsibility to protect ourselves from dangerous ideology. We should continue to cultivate good morals in our youth so as to allow them to differentiate right from wrong and not be easy prey for manipulative predators. (513 words)	Tackling the statement Successful use of complex sentence Succinct thesis statement Clear topic sentence Wide and apt range of vocab related to 'fire' Topic sentence begun differently Apt and wide vocab used Good signposting to show change in stance with 'However'. - More 'fire' imagery and related vocab - Skilful combination of two examples for the negative use of maxim. Good metaphor used
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Qn 3: What do you consider to be your greatest mistake? How has it affected you?

I am often queried on the shadow of **pained reminiscence** that **flits furtively** across my face whenever encountered with the image of some scenic mountains. Could this be a fear of heights? A phobia of nature? A terror of **these precipitous monoliths** that stand in **stoic defiance of gravity**? These notions, while logical, sorely miss their mark. This **incessant tic manifests** itself deep in the **womb of the June** that has just left us.

Under the pretext of helping us **alleviate** our stress, it is habitual for my mother to shepherd my brother and me overseas on month-spanning holidays; I reckoned it served the preservation of our social status more than anything else. That is not to say I was not grateful for them; they became events to cherish and look forward to. Last June, we took a trip over to Hong Kong. As usual, there were the **ubiquitous attractions** -- shopping malls, night markets, more shopping malls, more night markets -- but the landmark I had my eyes on were the mountains. For the better part of my time there, **they taunted** me from afar, **leered at my vertical ineptitude** like great **geological hyenas**.

How I wished they had stayed that way.

Two days before we would head home, my mother graced us with the opportunity of scaling those mountains. 'We could take a cable car up midway, then follow the trail upwards,' my mum beamed. For an hour, I endured the **ponderous serpentine line** to gain access to the cable car, then waited near an hour more for it to **gain purchase up the slopes** of the cliffs.

At long last, I climbed victorious from the **claustrophobic confines** of that accursed metal box to breathe long and deeply of the cool mountain air. At least, that's what I tried to do. As soon as my body left the car, I was hit by a wave of stifling heat from the jostling mass of tourists flailing onwards in an incomprehensible tangle of limbs. When I gasped for air, I was greeted by the stale scent that invariably **festoon** a crowd of that size. Sweat, breath and heat **conspired to contrive an olfactory assault** that drove the wind from my lungs and the enthusiasm from my heart.

I stumbled dejectedly over to a wooden bench, content to wallow in depression. There I stayed for my brief time on the mountain, waving off any attempt made by my family to treat with me.

'Let's just try to walk up the path,' my mother suggested, 'maybe it'll get better.'

I knew it wouldn't; so I stayed on my bench. After an hour of sulking and bargaining, my mother caved in to my mood and we elected to take the cable car back down.

On the way down, my gaze fell crestfallen to linger on the mountainside, knowing I would never experience its bounties: the **zephyr rushing** past the trees; the leaves swaying to their invisible tunes; the open gravel of the empty path...The open gravel of the empty path?

My eyes widened in a morbid Jim Carey impersonation and my face contorted into a grim parody of laughter. The cable car exit was a **bottleneck** for the tourists, with most of them remaining in its vicinity, too timid to brave the ascent. I sputtered, shouting for the cable car to stop, to go back up. This was a mistake! I had to go back up! I had to! But of course I couldn't.

Thus ends the tale of my greatest mistake – comical in its premise and saddening in its scale. This episode sobered me up to the wisdom in the **quintessential** idiom: 'Don't judge a book by its cover'. From then on, I have been taking empirical evidence on the quality of my reading material. So if you happen to catch a particularly **mesmerising** photograph of a mountain, please keep it as far away from me as possible. Please.

(657 words)

An unconventional approach but it works for Nigel has the language skills to use apt and wide vocabulary, as well as good mastery of sentence variety to create a beautiful personal recount of his mistake.

This is **not a recommended approach** as it goes beyond 500 words which may hamper the accuracy and entertainment value of the composition.

Nigel has skilfully made use of every word to create an enjoyable read. He has also made good use of literary devices like imagery, personification, metaphor and simile – to name just three – to add colours to his personal recount.

'Teenage years are the best times of our lives.' What, **in your opinion**, are the **advantages** and **disadvantages** of being a **teenager in Singapore**?

Usain Bolt, the current Olympics sprint king once proclaimed ironically: 'Life is like a marathon, not a sprint.' This quote resonates with me as I see teenage years – best times of our lives undoubtedly – are meant to be enjoyed for all their worth, despite the fact that they can be likened to taking a roller-coaster ride. Although Singaporean teenagers have to cope with a stressful education system and strict parents, they are blessed with opportunities afforded by the racial diversity unique to the country.

Firstly, Singaporean teenagers have to spend most of their time studying for examinations due to the stressful, results-oriented education system here. Granted that the compulsory 10-year education that the Government enforces on all children in Singapore aims to equip them with a solid foundation for success in adult life, there is a **dark cloud in that bright sky**. Schools are ranked according to their students' results and as a result, teachers go all out to prepare their charges for the major examination that most teenagers will take – the dreaded O Level examination. In order to ensure academic success, students are made to do endless tests and examinations to prepare them for the major examination. Indeed youth is wasted on the young here as we spend easily up to three-quarter of our waking hours on studying.

Next, Singaporean parents are known to be strict with the high expectations they set for their teenage children as they want the latter to be prepared for the competitive working world awaiting them. The meritocracy that Singapore practises ensures that only the most qualified candidates get the most desired positions – in school and at work – regardless of race, language or religion. Hence parents will do all they can to make their teenaged children study hard for the best grades they could obtain. Often, this would mean extra tuition classes and even some fanciful enrichment classes for the poor teenagers who could have used that time to explore and grow their non-academic pursuits.

Moving on to the bright side, the racial diversity and harmony in Singapore enables teenagers here to expand their horizon and broaden their perspectives of other cultures and races from around the world. Cosmopolitan Singapore celebrates festivals such as Deepavali (Hinduism), Hari Raya (Islam), Christmas (Christians) and Vesak Day (Buddhism). It is common practice amongst teenagers here to invite each other over to their house on such festive occasions. Furthermore, students in schools are encouraged to work on projects in multi-racial groups so that they can have a shared experience of solving problems with classmates of different backgrounds from them. All these social interactions can better equip the teenagers to be sensitive adults who can survive in the increasing globalised world of tomorrow,

Although some may begrudge the stress faced in teenage years, we should endure hardships and act as a sponge, soaking up and learning from all the life experiences faced. Just like running a marathon, we need to soldier on and enjoy the process. When we become adults, we can look back and smile, knowing that we are ready for success.

(514 words)

Good reference to quote
Simile
Succinct thesis statement

Clear topic sentence

Metaphor and contrast

Link with different phrasing

Singaporean context established

Good knowledge of different occasions

Bring in Sg context via schools

Apt and wide vocabulary

Reference back to marathon