

Q 3. Describe your favourite place and explain why this place holds so much meaning for you.

There is a playground near my home that I used to frequent with my father. We first visited it when I could walk independently but was barely capable of reaching the cookie jar on top of a kitchen counter without assistance. Everything seemed to overwhelm your senses when you were younger. After all, you were experiencing everything for the first time. The multi-chromatic colours of the world seemed sharper and more vivid; the sounds, more clear and melodious. The world seemed more spontaneous, wonder filled and ripe for adventure. The simplest things in life can become objects of fixative obsession for toddlers and who can blame them? The second visit to the zoo or second time eating chocolate will never be as magical or surreal as the first.

This playground was nothing to brag about. There was a swing that I had imagined was capable of sending me to the moon if only my father had the required strength, and a tall lead-paint covered slide with a see-saw set next to it. The colour of the slide was an obnoxiously garish crimson and the pivot of the see-saw had two cartoon horses plastered around it, directly opposite one another. It was no bigger than half a school hall.

Still, I remember countless days spent there, running around with boundless energy supplied by the vigour of youth. I remember the zephyr caressing my supple cheeks on each ride down the slide, as it seemingly accelerated me to the speed of light, thinking to myself that if only it were longer, maybe -- just maybe -- I could have flown like Superman. I felt safer at the playground than I did at home despite it being a public place. It was the only location in the neighbourhood that seemed to be unmolested by the stench of industrial smog and pollution. The breeze had a crisp and crystalline quality to it that I sorely miss and the overall atmosphere of the place was one of carefree optimism. Looking back, it is painful to think that there was a moment when my father and I went there for the last time --without realising it.

Alas, today, the playground is an art of commissioned mess awaiting its death sentence imposed by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. The lead paint has corroded -- it sharply protrudes in awkward angles from the smooth stainless-steel sheet it is laid on and the swing's chains have rusted into immobility. Even if they could still move with creaking noises, the flaking and compromised structure probably would not even support a child's weight. The cartoon horses have decayed into macabre caricatures of what they once were and now seem hostile, alien and even satanic. The entire carnival of rust stands in blatant defiance of every public safety code. Last I heard, the demolition team may come in with the wrecking ball as the entire estate has been slated for redevelopment.

This playground is still my favourite place. For some intangible reason it has an undeniable charm to it -- a certain *je nais se quoi*. It once was a sanctuary in my childhood, a place of catharsis after a long day at kindergarten as I sat in my throne -- swing seat -- to observe the world pass by. In the end, entropy will have its way in the universe and everything will fall into ruins and dust. The most precious things we have in this world are our treasured memories, not the places we hold dear or wealth we own. This playground will always stay with me as my favourite place, no matter how old I am or wherever I may roam.

(612 words)

Stanley made only a few errors and usually it is not advisable to write beyond 500 words.

Written by Stanley Yukon (4SA 2018); Edited by Mr Liang SF

Commented [LSF1]: Show-not-tell strategy used effectively

Commented [LSF2]: Effective use of description cum explanation to ensure meeting question requirements

Commented [LSF3]: Use of hyperbole and can almost feel what it was like sitting on that swing

Commented [LSF4]: Description to appeal to sense of sight

Commented [LSF5]: Sense of touch described

Commented [LSF6]: Expert use of a complex sentence to reveal thoughts

Commented [LSF7]: Sense of smell covered

Commented [LSF8]: Personification

Commented [LSF9]: Sense of sound covered

Commented [LSF10]: List of three for emphasis

Commented [LSF11]: French for a quality that eludes description

Commented [LSF12]: Metaphor

Commented [LSF13]: Use of apt and wide vocab for effect

Q 4: 'Zoos should be abolished because they promote the misery of animals.' What are your views?

Zoos have come to be a major draw for both the young and old all over the world. In which other place would you one be able to see so many different species within such a close distance of each other? However, the **proliferation** of zoos has raised some ethical issues: most notably, zoos promote the misery of animals due to the **subpar** conditions they provide, compared to the animals' natural habitats. Hence many people argue that zoos should **cease to exist**. While this may somewhat be the case, zoos still do a lot much to help our natural world and the animals that they house.

Firstly, zoos promote the appreciation of animals and the diversity of life on our planet. Zoos provide something unique to us, giving us a close-up encounter of different animals. **By allowing** us to see and sometimes interact with animals, it can create a sense of attachment and wonder for animals among us. **Consequently**, this will help us to develop a sense of appreciation of animals and the diversity of natural life. **This can have** a positive effect on our natural biodiversity, as people may be encouraged to do more to protect Earth's wildlife. Without the visits to the zoo that I made when I was a child, I would not have gained the love of animals that I have today. **My love for animals** This has inspired me to donate to organisations that protect wildlife. **Hence**, zoos allow us to value nature in general.

Moving on, zoos can be a **sanctuary** to help endangered species. Many endangered animals face the common plight of not being able to repopulate. **Furthermore**, the declining condition of natural habitats due to man-made activities makes an animals' ability to survive all the more difficult as well. That is where zoos can be a **safe haven** for animals, as they can be constantly monitored and sufficiently cared for to have good well-being. **Also**, zoos can utilise technology, such as artificial insemination, to make it easier for animals, especially endangered ones, to reproduce. **Furthermore** **Moreover**, by displaying this endangered animals in their exhibits and highlighting their plight, zoos can raise awareness of these animals and help to increase public support of these zoos conservation efforts. Therefore, zoos can help to prevent animals from extinction.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that zoos impact animals negatively too. The **confinement** that zoos bring can inevitably lead to negative psychological impacts on animals as zoos cannot provide the **comfort and freedom natural habitats** such as **forests** and **oceans** provide. Zoos can be **constricting** to animals as their enclosures would be **nowhere as big** as their original habitats. This **lack of space** and freedom can place discomfort and stress on animals. Furthermore, the noise created by visitors, and the fact that they are constantly **being watched** by humans, can be unnerving to animals. Fortunately, most zoos do recognise this problem and there are rules in place to ensure these zoos do their best to alleviate the situation. This can include mimicking aspects of animals' natural habitats like placing plants and trees in their enclosures and placing banners on their enclosures to remind visitors to reduce their noise levels. Undoubtedly, these measures can **cushion** the inevitable harshness some animals face in zoos.

Admittedly, the conditions that zoos provide for animals are not perfect, but many zoos do their utmost best to make their animals lead comfortable lives in captivity. They are determined to care and protect their animals sufficiently. Also, zoos can save the plight of animals and conserve them for future generations. Therefore, zoos should not be abolished as they do not set out to promote the misery of animals. Instead, zoos conserve our planet's biodiversity and encourage people to cherish it.

(619 words)

Written by: Isaac Lee (4SA 2018), Edited by: Mr Liang SF

Commented [LSF14]: Effective Hook

Commented [LSF15]: Use 'one' as opposed to 'you' as the latter may make the tone sound speech-like

Commented [LSF16]: Good synonyms used

Commented [LSF17]: Effective Thesis Statement

Commented [LSF18]: Clear Topic Sentence used

Commented [LSF19]: Use of transition words to show the development of argument

Commented [LSF20]: Link statement expressed in different words from Topic Sentence

Commented [LSF21]: Transition phrase to show connection to earlier point

Commented [LSF22]: Synonym used to refer to 'sanctuary' in Topic Sentence

Commented [LSF23]: A very layered approach of explanation by looking at various aspects

Commented [LSF24]: Good use of transition words to show cohesion

Commented [LSF25]: Good signpost to show a switch in argument

Commented [LSF26]: Apt and wide vocab used to describe how animals lack freedom in zoos

Commented [LSF27]: Diction – to play on sense of touch

Commented [LSF28]: Effective conclusion. Isaac has summarised his points by not repeating the same words used earlier as much as possible.

By and large, Isaac had made only very few errors. You are advised to write within 500 words.

For Qn 4, can try this good approach by Akhilesh A Danapalan (4S1/2018)

When I was a child, I constantly begged my parents to bring me to the zoo. However, that changed when I grew up. I realised the sad truths behind zoos. As I learnt to put myself into the shoes of others, I soon realised the miserable lives that animals lead in zoos – separated from their kin, living in small and pathetic enclosures and being fed boring food every day. Hence I agree largely that zoos should be abolished because they promote the misery of animals.

Firstly, the enclosures in zoos can bring about huge discomfort to the animals. To begin with, these enclosures are really small and cramped. For example, a **10-metre by 10-metre ‘cage’** is used to house a lion. In the wild, this mighty king of the jungle has the freedom to explore **acres of land**. Additionally, most enclosures do not bear any resemblance to the animals’ natural habitats. Jaguars are kept in cages with glass windows so that visitors can view them up close and they have to bear the flashes of ‘lightning’ **emanating** from the latter’s cameras. Hence, being kept in an unfamiliar and incredibly small area can be **detrimental** to the animals’ mental and physical health.

Next, although being fed food may seem like a dream for some people, it is unhealthy for these zoo animals. ~~Why am I saying this? Well, as you can see~~ **This practice** is unnatural and soon the animals will lose their natural instincts to hunt for their prey. **At the same time**, by not chasing after their food, these animals lose their daily exercise and do not develop the necessary muscles. **Worse still**, these animals grow dependent on their caretakers for food and become lazy. Scientists **also assert** that big cats like tigers can be mentally affected when denied the opportunity to maul their prey.

Lastly, animals lack company in zoos. Some animals are separated from their family and brought to zoos. ~~On top of that~~ Moreover, some of them are all alone in their enclosures without any of their kind to keep them company. **Just like how loneliness is detrimental to humans’ mental health**, it also affects animals. They can feel lost and lonely without having any companion to play and interact with, much like how prisoners in isolation cells feel. In the long run, such animals will develop depression.

Nelson Mandela once said this: **‘There is enough on this earth for everyone’s needs, but not for everyone’s greed.’** Indeed, when someone wants too much, somebody else loses out. Accordingly, **humans** enjoy the **convenience and pleasure** of viewing animals in zoos without having to travel to the latter’s habitats but it is at the expense of the **animals’ freedom and happiness**. Hence, zoos should be abolished to let animals roam free in the wild. (462 words)

5. What do you consider to be your greatest lesson? How has it impacted you?

My father always told me this: ‘A setback is a setup for a comeback.’ I realised this was true **last year (2017)** when I experienced such a situation. It has turned out to be a life-changing experience as well as a hard knock for me.

Back in January 2017, **being an avid runner**, I was enrolled to represent my school in the annual National Schools Track and Field competition. A year before, I had achieved great success in the competition, clinching two silver medals – a record haul as my school was not exactly a track and field powerhouse. Beaming with optimism, my teacher and

Commented [LSF29]: Use of personal recount as Hook

Commented [LSF30]: Effective use of em dash to write a complex sentence

Commented [LSF31]: Simple Thesis Statement that clearly states the stand

Commented [LSF32]: Good use of contrast to 10mx10m cage

Formatted: Font: Bold, Complex Script Font: Bold

Commented [LSF33]: Apt vocab

Commented [LSF34]: Some boys love to use this speech tone which is wrong for an essay like this

Commented [LSF35]: Good use of transition words to show the development of argument

Commented [LSF36]: Don’t use more words than necessary

Commented [LSF37]: Use of comparison to explain how animals feel

Commented [LSF38]: An effective use of quote to start off an emphatic conclusion. There is no introduction of new idea – right thing to as it should not be happening in a conclusion. Akhilesh has done well in summarising his argument by using different words.

Commented [LSF39]: Important to state the year

Commented [LSF40]: Establishing context

coach were expecting me to better my own records. However, such high hopes and aspirations came crashing down like a spaceship on its return from space.

Commented [LSF41]: Use of simile for effect

About a week to the competition, I was feeling good and hyped up for it as I had undergone intensive training during the holiday months of November and December (2016). I was very well prepared and motivated. Alas, I was defeated by my lust for food.

Commented [LSF42]: Diction – play on a sin

'John, you should not be eating this laksa,' my buddy Win Shang had advised me, seeing how I was slurping the aromatic curry gravy of my favourite noodles dish. 'Try eating something healthy, just in case...'

Commented [LSF43]: Use of dialogue to create liveliness

'Fret not, I've always been eating this,' I cut Win Shang off there, 'and well, my strong stomach can handle these raw cockles,' I grinned as I wolfed down spoonful of noodles with shell fish that were at best 15% cooked by the piping hot curry.

Commented [LSF44]: Revealing character

Food poisoning ensued that night. A few runs to the toilet were luckily stopped after I had downed some 'poh chai' pills – Chinese medicines that my family have sworn by for generations. Luckily I managed to get at least three hours of sleep for that night.

Next day. 'You sure you're fit to run?' enquired my worried teacher, Mdm Halimah.

'No problem, Ma'am,' I assured her despite feeling feeble from the lack of water. My father had accompanied me to the stadium. He had that look of disapproval on his face but he always allowed me to make crucial decisions of my own.

Commented [LSF45]: Not forgetting the father whose words were quoted in the introduction.

Beep! 'Ready, get set... Go!'

Commented [LSF46]: Describing the sound

Despite my best efforts, there was no fairy-tale ending as I had failed to qualify for the finals of any events I participated in. Distraught, I was in a state of shock and awe.

'Son, I hope you've learned from this nasty lesson,' cooed my father.

Commented [LSF47]: Father is here again.

After that, I trained even harder for the competition in the following year (2018) and this time, I was especially disciplined when it came to watching my diet. After months of intensive training and strict diet, I had never felt better than before and that put me in the best condition to participate in this year's events. Success came and I managed to win my first ever gold in the 2000-metre steeplechase event. I was over the moon. I was even chosen to represent Singapore in the ASEAN school games to be held after my O level examination!

Commented [LSF48]: Lesson learned

Commented [LSF49]: Use of idiom

This lesson has left an indelible mark in my character as I had not let a major setback destroy me. It had instead spurred me to apply the same discipline and perseverance in my studies as well. I was not really good in Math but I put in disciplined practice and dogged resilience to overcome all difficult sums. It had made me overcome my weakness and I also scored my highest grade for Math (B3) in my N level examination last year. I have also since adopted the same never-say-die attitude to study for my upcoming O level examination.

Commented [LSF50]: Explaining the impact of the lesson

(608 words)

Written by: Jerrell Lim (5J1 2018) Edited by: Mr Liang SF

- A bit too long but luckily Jerrell did not make that many mistakes
- You're advised to write in 500 words
- Be mindful to just have one person speak in a paragraph

6. 'Students should be given more choice in how they want to learn and what they want to learn.' Do you agree?

'Argh! Additional Math is so useless! When are we ever going to use all these functions in our life? Calculus? It's more like "Cal-kill-us"! It is common to hear students complain about subjects they are forced to take and how boring the lessons are. Does giving students more choice in what and how they learn solve this conundrum then? Personally, I think the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Why? Let me enumerate this in my essay. Students are too young to make rational decisions and they must learn that the world is not going to cater to their needs. However, when students are offered options, it would improve their interest and learning abilities.

First and foremost, Being young, students tend to make irrational choices. Lacking the insight and experience that adults like teachers and parents possess, students may make decisions based on gut feeling or herd instinct – following their peers blindly. Presenting them with more choices may just lead them down the wrong road in the future. Using the Additional Math example, it is safe to say that it may not be useful for students keen to pursue business studies or humanities in tertiary institutions. However, for aspiring engineers, it is absolutely crucial. At the age of 14, many students would reply 'IDK' – 'I don't know' – when asked about what their future career goals. Hence, it is best to let students make such career-affecting decisions when they are mature.

Next, if students are encouraged to follow their passion and inclination, they will not learn that the real world does not revolve around them. Students of this generation are mostly self-entitled. They feel that they are a special snowflake whose choices only matter to them and do not care about the needs of those around them, including their parents. Thus, by giving in to their whims and fancies, a school would have to employ more teachers to either teach non-mainstream subjects -- like Communication Studies as opposed to English – or use differently pedagogies to engage the different learning profiles of students. This will upset the natural balance of the education system and more taxpayers' money will need to be spent on educating these youths. Ultimately, having their ego fed so well, these students would be unprepared for the harsh realities of the working world where the company's bottom-line is paramount.

Admittedly, when students are studying subjects they love and in the way that suits them best, they are more inclined to be motivated and self-directed in their learning. They will be seen enjoying the lesson, doing project work with great relish and much independence. Some may even do further research on the topics to deepen their knowledge. Although such students may obtain the desired excellent results in their chosen subjects, they might come up short as they have not been developed holistically as a student. Worst still, their choice subjects might not yield them any meaningful employment with decent remuneration in future. By that time, it would be too late to make any U-turn. Sadly, even when students may excel in their chosen subject, many other doors could be closed on them.

In a nutshell, Freedom of choice has its caveats. Decisions affecting one's future must be made only when one is mature and can see the implications down the road decades from now. As teenagers are still growing and making sense of the world, it is best we keep the status-quo. After all, the western model education system has turned out fine for generations of students.

(574 words)

Written by: Keegan Tay (4SA 2018) Edited by: Mr Liang SF

Commented [LSF51]: Cute play of words. Correct use of quotation marks within a quote.

Commented [LSF52]: Don't use a casual speech style. Wasting words and affecting tone of essay.

Commented [LSF53]: This thesis statement may not be necessary if you have more than 500 words for the essay.

Commented [LSF54]: Don't waste words unnecessarily.

Commented [LSF55]: Good use of evidence to show, not tell, teenagers' lack of focus in life.

Commented [LSF56]: Topic sentence phrased differently for each body paragraph.

Commented [LSF57]: Apt and wide vocab used (in **bold**)

Commented [LSF58]: Link statement has different words from the topic sentence.

Commented [LSF59]: Adverb used to show a shift in idea – looking at advantages.

Commented [LSF60]: Use such phrasing to show possibility as opposed to declaring unverified truth pompously.

Commented [LSF61]: Good use of metaphor – doors.

Commented [LSF62]: Don't use this. Sounds informal.

Commented [LSF63]: Correct use of 'one' as pronoun.