

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/11

Paper 11

Key Messages

Content

- Make use of illustrations and examples that clearly further the argument.
- As far as possible, devote equal attention and time to both answers.
- Identify and react to the key phrases in a question, for example 'How far is this true', 'To what extent', or 'How reliable'.
- Ensure an answer is of sufficient length.
- Repeating the question in the opening paragraph does not benefit the answer.
- The use of the phrases 'to conclude' or 'in conclusion' at the beginning of an essay's final paragraph is rarely conducive to good writing.
- Choose a question which best suits what you know. This may not be the question that may appear to be the 'easy option'.
- All candidates should only answer one question from a section.

Use of English

- Leave time to check your English thoroughly to avoid basic errors.
- Concentrate on using appropriate vocabulary so expression is fluent and precise.
- Basic sentence structure/grammar needs to be accurate to ensure clear communication of content.

General Comments

Many of the comments to follow relate to some of the Key Messages.

It is vital that candidates try to address the title: simply reflecting upon the topic, rather than the question in the title, will not give access to the higher mark bands. While it is both commendable and desirable to include examples, it is not possible to make an argument by an accumulation of examples alone. Examiners look out for candidates' ideas that are stimulated by the title. Answers should take into account that most question titles (though not all) ask for balanced arguments, by which both (or more) 'sides' of a question are examined. Some of the responses lacked a conclusion, or merely used the final paragraph to repeat the points made in the body of the essay. What is wanted is a judgement by the candidate, which reaches an 'evaluation' based upon the strength of the previously-examined arguments.

This said, there were many engaging, fluent and articulate essays that revealed a wide knowledge of historical and contemporary events. With questions posed in the three domains of culture, science, and society, candidates had a variety of topics where they could discuss their views and opinions in order to offer solutions to some major issues. Essays were generally well-constructed with a clear definition of the question or sense of direction revealed in the first paragraph. Essay content varied between lists of facts and discursive anecdotes to more profound explorations of views that covered divergence of opinion or even challenged established beliefs. There were more instances this session where those reading the essays were struck by the personal engagement and thoughtfulness of the candidates. References to a number of relevant magazine articles contributed to many answers. Many candidates are clearly very well informed even those whose essay writing ability, forensic skills or arguments were wanting.

Answers of a formulaic nature were few, with many responses showing arguments that were individually tailored to the varying demands of the questions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a very popular topic and was generally well done. Several candidates were able to look at the topic objectively and gave several reasons as to why there should/should not be limits; most considered both sides of the argument. Many answers included informed reference to specific incidents to support their points: for example, in their argument in favour of limits many made reference to '1984' and the horror of the Big Brother state depicted by Orwell. Constitutional recognition of citizens' rights was noted and explored in many responses and the need for increased surveillance following terrorist attacks was at the forefront of many candidates' minds. More references to states other than the candidate's own would have enhanced these answers. There were, for example, interesting opinions on the use of drones but rarely did anyone mention their usefulness, such as in mapping, surveying, aerial assessment of archaeological sites/buildings and so on. As always, the strongest answers evaluated the arguments in detail, recognised shades of grey and focused on 'extent'.

Question 2

This was a very popular topic that elicited passionately engaged responses. There was an emphasis on: the limitations of school provision, the shortcomings of standardised tests which may test only memory skills, the irrelevance of homework when online essays are available to buy, and teachers' aptitudes. There were some very knowledgeable critiques of current education policy and the lack of stimulation in an educative culture obsessed with testing and a narrow curriculum. A few answers distinguished between the LEDC and MEDC countries. The characteristics of persuasive answers were structured responses that discussed the provision of educational, financial, practical, inspirational, and moral support. There were responses that explored how education can help the aspirations of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and a few that indicated how the provision of educational opportunities has given the disabled independence. A few candidates dwelt too long on the damage caused by teenage temptations and distractions and did not pay enough attention to how the idea of 'potential' can be interpreted. However several stronger answers broadened the discussion through the inclusion of evidence from education in different contexts such as the education of girls in certain parts of the world. Narrower responses utilised examples from experience in too anecdotal a way, rather than linking these to a wider argument. There is a big difference between 'there is a girl in our class who...' and 'suppose a child in the current education system...' A few really good answers looked at the idea of 'potential' in human terms and 'education' in its widest sense.

Question 3

This was not a widely taken up question, but those that attempted it argued from a variety of perspectives and were often successful in going beyond the obvious areas for exploration, the oceans and outer space. A few answers ingeniously questioned the question by arguing that the various forms of modern communication provide ample opportunities for the creatively adventurous. Others referred to the challenges of global warming and of finding cures for diseases therefore thoughtfully broadening out the question's more obvious frame of reference. Some argued that online experiences are capable of providing adventure, for example e-meetings with people from other cultures. These candidates recognised that other languages and cultures are social and communication challenges left for humankind.

Question 4

This proved to be a popular question. Choices included: witnessing the Renaissance and others to medieval times. It has to be said, however, that only a few candidates wrote in an evaluative way; the majority, once the time period had been identified, simply went on to describe various happenings that had occurred then. Strong answers, on the other hand, demonstrated knowledge of a specific period and gave focused comments on what would be gained from travelling back to a particular period. Open-ended questions like this can lead to poorly focused 'write everything you know about...' answers unless carefully considered. There were many history essays, rather than responses enlivened by what the candidate found appealing in the timeframe selected. Some candidates were able to use personal circumstances to produce evaluative and wide-ranging responses, such as a few responses in which the candidate chose to visit their own ancestors and were able to convey, very convincingly, affection for family and a yearning for lost knowledge. This question could be responded to effectively with both a knowledgeable and a personal response. Those candidates who chose to ignore the second part of the question did themselves a disservice.

Section B

Question 5

This was a popular choice designed to appeal to those who know about genetics. Several candidates wrote confidently on the subject using specialist terms as appropriate while referring to research on the topic to support their comments. There were some inspiring stories of those who had triumphed against the genetic odds together with reflections on 'free will' which made a strong case for the responsibility of the individual to overcome (in many ways) their genetic inheritance. Some responses also demonstrated awareness of the nature/nurture debate and recognised that environment, background and other factors are of significant importance. Other good responses looked at the ethical issues to do with designer babies and the ways in which medical research has been developed through genetic knowledge.

Question 6

This was quite a popular question. Most essays argued for and against vegetarianism and berated methods of farming that are perceived as necessitating animal cruelty. A few essays merely defined types of nutritional needs rather than arguing a case. Stronger responses were defined by the ability to move seamlessly amongst arguments about the dietary concerns, environmental benefits and drawbacks, the question of GM farming and religious and ethical recommendations. Many of these showed an impressive depth of knowledge, for instance regarding forms of protein and the human digestive system. Weaker answers feared for the extinction of animals or conversely that we would be overrun by animals if we ate less meat.

Question 7

This question drew responses from only a few candidates. Stronger answers took into account how truth may be hidden in statistics and how that could happen whereas less strong responses did not concentrate on reliability but simply described what statistics were collected. Nevertheless responses to this question mostly included a good understanding of statistics, and who understood bias and variables, and how statistics might be distorted or selected to suit an agenda or purpose. The need to appreciate the phrasing of the question was of the utmost importance. Those that did so, focused on reliability and considered all three areas; health, crime, and employment.

Question 8

This topic attracted several responses, though not many distinguished between parks and open spaces and gardens. However it was adequately answered with a fair range of relevant example. The key idea in this question is importance and those that considered parks, gardens, and open spaces separately were able to provide full and detailed responses. On the face of it this is a very straightforward question, precisely the sort of question where a few moments attempting to sketch an outline of an essay might have deterred the unfortunate few from attempting an essay on a topic upon which they had nothing much to say. Few responses offered many examples of specific places and of the diverse activities that can take place in them. Only a few responses pondered the full significance of the word 'enhance' and somehow, the matter of 'importance' was assumed, rather than argued. Incidentally there was no need to present the negative aspects of these features especially if it was clear that they were generally favoured.

Section C

Question 9

This question received fewer answers than many other but it provoked many strong responses from those that attempted it. It was a question that required the deployment of specific knowledge and was an opportunity for those with a particular interest in literature. Authors mentioned included Jane Austen, JK Rowling, Harper Lee, Louisa M Alcott, Maya Angelou and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Many chose writers whose main themes are race, poverty, and oppression, which were sensible choices given the title. One, however, wrote with great passion and insight about the style of Jane Austen while other very good attempts were observed in the selection of feminist writers of more modern periods. There was also some good discussion of aspects of different genres.

Question 10

This question elicited sympathetic personal responses that tended, however, to narrate the plots of the films chosen as example, and be generally descriptive in approach. It was a very accessible question but the quality of the responses depended on whether or not the idea of ‘shaping an understanding of the world’ was followed up with adequate illustration. Strong answers were evaluative and thus responding to the ‘how true’ part of the question. These responses eschewed lengthy plot descriptions and concentrated on what could be gained from films and the personal influence these had upon them. Less assured answers made sweeping statements about ‘feel good’ films. A few commented appropriately on the impact of documentaries about global issues.

Question 11

Many responses introduced arguments that demonstrated that candidates were aware that this is not a general question about celebrity culture. Angelina Jolie was a popular example, and there were a few candidates who described accurately the nature of the substantial task she had undertaken. Strong responses saw candidates describe, explain and justify the difference that celebrities had made through their endorsement of humanitarian causes and their support for disaster relief funds. For example the ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’ was cited as a good example of celebrities getting involved to raise the profile of a worthy cause. The majority of candidates were able to discern both philanthropic and self-serving elements in the promotion of charities by celebrities and often produced some appropriate and well-considered examples.

Question 12

This topic requires specific examples of books for meaningful discussion, unfortunately, a number of responses made no reference to specific examples. Many responses suggested nostalgia as an important reason for adult enjoyment of children’s books. Stronger answers drew much from named books and authors, popular and productive examples being the works of Dr Seuss and JK Rowling. Only a few mentioned the pleasurable experience of reading children’s literature with and to a child. The opportunity to discuss the subtlety present in books that are supposedly directed towards children was taken up by the few who recognised the layers of meaning that are often present in myth and fable. These candidates appreciated that the appeal of children’s stories often lies in their moral value and in the fact that a well-written children’s book is likely to appeal to readers of all ages.

Use of English

Most of the scripts read this session were more than acceptably literate and some were expressed in a very mature and sophisticated style. There are still a few who adopt too informal a register but there were not many of these.

Significantly, however, a few essays verged on the undecipherable. Instances of this nature were infrequent and it is to be hoped, that in the future, some dispensation is found for those candidates whose handwriting is very difficult to read. Where candidates have developed awkward or eccentric flourishes in their handwriting, they need to correct them as best they can.

Apostrophes, as ever, are an endangered species but candidates should know that Examiners still believe in them!

Please note that inverted commas for titles are expected.

On a matter of style – candidates need to avoid the trap of assertion: this is easily sidestepped with adjustments to expression, for example ‘Everybody knows...’ becomes ‘Many people might think...’ or ‘The only way is...’ becomes ‘One possible solution could be...’ and so on.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/12

Paper 12

Key Messages

Content

- Answer the **set** question and focus on the key words.
- Choose a question which best suits what you know.
- Support your main points with appropriate examples.
- Keep anecdotal/personal evidence to a minimum.
- An introduction should immediately address the question and show understanding of it.
- A conclusion should be a reasoned assessment of the arguments made.
- Ensure that all aspects of the question are addressed.
- Re-visit the question after each paragraph.

Use of English

- Leave time to check your English thoroughly to avoid basic errors.
- Concentrate on using appropriate vocabulary so expression is fluent and precise.
- Basic sentence structure/grammar needs to be accurate to ensure clear communication of content.

General Comments

More successful responses answered the question as set and included a variety of examples to illustrate the main points of the essay. There were responses which understood the question but offered few or no examples at all resulting in vague and generalised arguments, hence missing the opportunity to show knowledge.

When the set question demands it, candidates should focus on aspects of their own country; if this is not the prompt, then a broader focus is required. Sometimes more than one aspect of the question needs to be addressed, otherwise the response could be considered restricted. More successful responses addressed all aspects, demonstrated good topic knowledge and included local, regional and global examples to support points. Less successful responses wrote on topics with which they were insufficiently familiar and provided little or no evidence to support points made. Candidates need to spend time studying the chosen question to make sure they understand what is being asked and then re-visit after every paragraph to check that key words are being addressed. Although topic knowledge was often thorough and detailed, there was a tendency to present it more as a descriptive list than an evaluative discussion.

Most candidates used the time reasonably efficiently and were able to produce two clearly structured essays of around the recommended length. Whereas introductions were often succinct and showed a clear understanding of the question, some tended to be too long and unfocused; this is where the candidate should begin to address the key words, to reassure themselves that, from the beginning, they understand the question. Less effective conclusions merely listed points from the essay rather than producing a reasoned, personal assessment.

There were slightly more rubric infringements than usual this session but 'short' essays (less than 375 words) were rare. The quality of the Use of English was variable, although there were hardly any 'weak' responses. Many candidates have acquired a wide-ranging English vocabulary but need to improve putting these words into an appropriate context in order to achieve precision. Grammatical accuracy and correct word order, within a sentence, are essential for the clear communication of content and to avoid disrupting the flow. Generally, spelling and punctuation were of a good standard but candidates could improve their English mark by checking for basic errors, some of which are outlined below. Clumsy or awkward expressions do not obscure meaning as much as grammatical inaccuracies.

Use of English

Basic errors need to be checked and corrected in order to improve English marks. Typical examples are listed below:

- Subject/verb non-agreement
- Frequent incorrect use of definite/indefinite article (the society)
- Omission of apostrophes
- Confusion between their/there, to/too, your/you're
- Incorrect comparative forms (more wide)
- Missing endings on plurals because of poor checking
- Incorrect use of vocabulary
- Incorrect use of preposition (causes disruption but checking can correct this).

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This question was not too popular but responses were of a good standard. Most candidates were able to define 'democracy' accurately and provide examples of protests (Colonialism, Pakistan separatism from India, South Africa, Arab Spring) while identifying key figures (Luther King, Mandela, Gandhi). More successful responses assessed their importance/impact on the 'democratic process' whereas less successful ones just listed such events. However, nearly all candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of this question.

Question 2

This was quite a popular question with some well informed responses. Less successful ones were hesitant about what constituted an alliance or community, so that trading with another country or giving humanitarian aid in an emergency were sometimes included. Many answers were quite generalised about what alliances might achieve and sometimes limited themselves to 'the military'. The more successful responses clearly recognised the work of the U.N. and its constituent bodies and were able to assess their value. On a local level, there was a clear reference to A.S.E.A.N and an understanding of the relevance of the E.U. in terms of trade and freedom of movement.

Question 3

This question was popular and produced a range of responses. Some just described different types of families and said little about traditions or talked about traditions and said little about families. The idea of rights was problematic for some, but more successful responses were able to discuss possible sources of conflict (arranged marriages, education, privacy, independence) where the rights of an individual were placed in the context of 'family and tradition' in which some 'rights' (career choices) were easier to achieve than others (arranged marriages). Conclusions often valued the priority of 'family and tradition' over individual rights.

Question 4

This was not a popular question and was generally not well done. Most described what parents should do to prevent boredom, supporting the premise that boredom was a negative concept causing children to resort to crime/drug use. More successful responses recognised that 'boredom' could lead to patience/self-control/creativity.

Question 5

A wide range of achievement was seen in responses to this very popular question. Less successful responses ignored 'the entertainment industry' and just wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of the internet, 'harm' and 'good' seen in the context of effects on the user. Most candidates discussed piracy, promotion through advertising, effects on celebrity, etc. with the most successful ones considering a wide range of 'entertainment' and providing a balanced evaluation. The financial losses of piracy were balanced against the right of freedom of access to everything on the internet, often evaluating the moral implications of all this.

Question 6

Although quite popular, responses demonstrated variable degrees of knowledge. Most referred to other renewable energies as well as solar power, though only the most successful responses were able to make a reasoned assessment of its popularity. Some simply described how solar power and other renewables worked (the physics of the process) but others attempted to make specific comparisons with alternatives. Occasionally, 'solar' was only briefly considered with wind and H.E.P. dominating the response.

Question 7

There were few responses to this question. Most only considered Maths and either ignored 'foreign languages' or made generalised comparisons (both are difficult to learn). Most used mathematical examples and emphasised 'usefulness' and any reference to languages did the same. An occasional successful response did make close comparisons with specific examples from both Maths and foreign languages, but it was generally not well done.

Question 8

This was not a popular question. Most candidates were able to say something about medical needs in their country, but did not always consider 'young people'. Less successful responses were vague about monitoring and screening, tending to describe the poor quality of health care in their country. More successful ones recognised that vaccinations, check-ups and screening for diseases were essential, especially in rural areas, but tended to ignore the financial implications of this. The young were seen as the future of the country so their welfare and protection were crucial. Hardly any responses considered the negatives of screening.

Question 9

This question was very popular. Most responses dealt with some advantages and disadvantages, but level of success depended on degree of development. Less successful responses tended to list or just wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of the internet. More successful ones acknowledged that the benefits of 'social media' were in terms of developing self-confidence and literary skills as well as 'increasing circles of friends'. There was an awareness of hacking and cyber-bullying as well as the dangers of giving out personal details. The most successful ones considered the global impact of various forms of writing (biography, diary, news, cultural exchange).

Question 10

Although not popular, this question was generally well done. Less successful responses listed musicians referring to music as songs (some with words and some without). However, there were many successful responses which considered a range (from classical to electronic pop) and evaluated the value of words in music.

Question 11

Many responses to this popular question generalised about tourism, ignoring 'historical sites', sometimes considering landscape and modern buildings. More successful responses focused clearly on the question alluding to a range of sites and how far the government was prepared to keep them in a good state of repair. The effects of terrorism, political stability, priority, culture and modern development were also considered in the context of the popularity and accessibility of specific sites. The most successful had plenty of examples.

Question 12

This was not a popular question. Most responses distinguished between visual and language but used limited examples. Here, there was a tendency to focus mostly on 'visual', relating to the immediate impact of such things as 'pop-ups' on the internet. The most successful responses provided examples and also considered the fact that language does have a role to play but may well have had more of an impact before television was superseded by more modern forms of technology.

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 8004/13

Paper 13

Key Messages

Content

- Focus on the keywords of the question and ensure that all aspects of the question are covered.
- Choose two questions carefully, making sure you understand them fully and have sufficient knowledge/examples to produce meaningful content.
- Keep anecdotal material to a minimum.
- Responses should be of sufficient length to develop an argument.
- Only address issues raised by the question.

Use of English

- Check your English thoroughly to avoid careless errors.
- Avoid writing in a 'chatty', informal style ('way too much', 'tons of', 'gonna').
- Provide a clear linkage between sentences so that there is logical progression through the paragraphs.

General Comments

A few responses were detailed and thorough and addressed the question, with some focus on the keywords and supplying a variety of relevant examples to illustrate the main points. However, a considerable number of responses contained few or no examples, resulting in vague and generalised arguments; credible evidence, not just anecdotes, is needed to support points.

Candidates should focus on their own country when prompted to in the question; if this is not the case, then a broader focus is required. Many candidates did possess good knowledge of the topic, especially if it concerned 'own country', and provided balanced answers to the question.

A number of candidates wrote their answers in informal, colloquial English which was inappropriate for a serious, formal discursive essay. 'Jokey' rhetorical questions and commands such as 'imagine...' reduced the impact of important statements. However, some candidates did adapt the tone to match the requirements of the question and writing was often accurate with appropriate vocabulary. Clear structured paragraphing was usually a feature of most responses.

Most candidates managed their time wisely and completed both essays, but there was evidence that some candidates rushed the second one, leaving insufficient time to conduct a thorough and systematic check of their use of English.

Introductions should focus on the key words of the question to show understanding of it rather than be a lengthy pre-amble. Conclusions should not simply list the points made in the main body of the essay but should be a reasoned assessment of previous arguments.

Although there were very few instances of rubric infringement, a number of essays were 'short' (below 375 words) and lost marks for use of English as a result. Also, this would not be of sufficient length to develop a meaningful argument.

It is important for candidates to answer the actual question set and not offload everything they know about a topic area.

Use of English

Use of English marks can be needlessly lost through basic errors and informal expression, examples of which are listed below:

- Subject/verb non-agreement
- Informal vocabulary such as 'kinda', 'gonna', 'awesome
- Words not separated, e.g. 'alot', 'infact', 'aswell'
- Confusion between there/their, to/too, hear/here, crisis/crises
- Incorrect use of apostrophes
- Use of 'amount' instead of 'number' (amount of people)
- Overuse of 'their' and 'they'. This suggests the need for a more formal style.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This was a very popular question and was generally well done. Many candidates balanced the arguments, often using examples from family and friends. Often there was an 'indignant tone', arguing against the conventional stereotype. Many listed domestic activities, suggesting that men could share, but also considered gender-specific roles (physical strength of men/child-rearing instinct of women). More successful responses attempted to place the argument in an historical and cultural context to emphasise that having an opinion on such an issue is often determined by complex value systems.

Question 2

This question was not popular. Most responses were descriptions/narratives; candidates found it quite challenging to maintain a sense of the historical time of the person chosen as well as a contemporary perspective on them. Detailed knowledge was shown of chosen figures (Marilyn Monroe, Luther King, Gandhi) but more successful responses considered the contemporary view, often concluding that historical characters can leave a legacy but are still products of their time.

Question 3

This was an unpopular question. Most responses just linked trafficking to prostitution and were more effective on causes than 'ways to defeat', which were often unconvincing or simplistic. The more successful ones widened the scope to consider poverty/war/repression as causes, suggesting that these needed defeating in order to defeat trafficking.

Question 4

Many responses to this question, which was not popular, suggested that telling any secret was whistle-blowing and were often generalised, lacking specific examples. More successful responses did identify whistle-blowers (Snowden) and focused the argument on 'justifiable', whether it was to protect the individual/society from exploitation or put the public/businesses at risk (terrorism, information to competitors, state secrets). Freedom of information was a common theme in such responses.

Question 5

This question was quite popular. Although some responses veered towards science-fiction fantasy, most attempted to discuss robotic technology in medicine, warfare and factories, using examples and exhibiting a fair degree of knowledge. More successful responses considered the human aspect: for example, how people might react to robots in hitherto human-only situations or in areas where feelings/emotions were involved.

Question 6

Again, this question was quite popular, although responses were only just satisfactory as understanding of 'lifestyles' was limited. 'Ignorance' itself was often misunderstood, many taking it to mean 'disrespectful behaviour', usually via social media. More successful responses argued against the question, suggesting that the internet is increasing awareness and empathy with other cultures but also acknowledging that communication on social media tends to be between communities who share similar lifestyles.

Question 7

There were few responses to this question. Most candidates were able to suggest ways to reduce energy consumption in order to preserve fossil fuels, although that was acknowledged to be only a short-term solution. Renewable energies were also considered. More successful responses provided balanced discussions and addressed 'how far do you agree', often with the premise that 'using less energy is not a solution' but developing 'renewables' and making them accessible to all is the way forward.

Question 8

This question was very popular. Most candidates were able to consider issues to do with diet, exercise, parental control and guidance. Occasionally other pertinent matters were discussed (stress, bullying, poor self-image, pre-existing medical conditions) and how these might be dealt with. Sometimes there was a tendency to just focus on diet, hence narrowing the scope. The most successful responses attempted to compare lifestyles thirty years ago with the present day and whether there were lessons to be learnt.

Question 9

Very few attempted this question. Most responses focused on describing narratives but there was relatively little discussion. Some made reference to being 'educated' by the books, but very few dealt with being 'provoked'. More successful responses attempted to explore the morality and messages in the stories.

Question 10

There were very few responses to this question. Most struggled to 'account for this trend' but did present some knowledge about 'films' (the artist) rather than 'photography'. Relevant points were often generalised but more successful responses considered the appropriateness of 'black and white' for certain genres (Film Noire/War/historical periods), suggesting that colour was a distraction to the creation of certain moods or themes. Very few examples were given.

Question 11

This question was quite popular. Most dealt with admirable qualities of the chosen sport, but relatively few explicitly addressed 'recognition' or 'worldwide'. Soccer was a popular choice but referred to 'recognition' in the U.S. rather than worldwide. Some chose 'dance' and 'cheerleading', attempting to justify them as sport, which more successful ones did by relating them to the physical aspects (training regimes, competitiveness, skills required). Better responses chose a minority sport (soft ball) and considered it in the context of 'recognition worldwide'.

Question 12

Most responses to this question, which was not popular, provided sensible discussions about the balance to be struck between international and national/local news. Sometimes there were detailed descriptions of national news stories and their impact on international opinion. However, there were some successful responses which were more analytical/critical of the media's coverage of international stories, sometimes suggesting that it was determined by 'your country's' degree of involvement and current public interest.