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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Second Semester Examination  
2017/2018 Academic Session

May/June 2018

**HEK222 – Critical Reading And Writing**

Duration : 3 hours

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Please check that this examination paper consists of NINE (9) pages of printed material before you begin the examination.

Answer any **FOUR (4)** questions.

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1. In the letter below, HSY claims that the current educational system in Malaysia must be reformed by combining the use of technology with education. Are his arguments persuasive enough? Explain your answer by referring to relevant details from the text.

WHAT is our future in education? Are we going to get rid of textbooks? Are we using tablets to enhance teaching? Fact is our education system has not changed much since the last century. The old system remains, with teachers teaching in classrooms while their students keep quiet and listen. Everything from textbooks to the syllabus is the same. I think we need an educational revolution.

Some may have heard of the “twenty-first century learning” concept implemented by the Government. Is it really working? The only change is that students are required to present information from the textbooks, which they have to read by themselves beforehand. Some may argue that students will understand better this way. However, as a student, I feel that we are just regurgitating the contents of the textbook through a computer presentation program or the white board. I do not see much improvement via this method.

What other alternatives do we have? How about combining technology with education? The idea of using online textbooks was proposed a few years ago but I have not seen it being implemented yet. As such, students still have to carry thick and heavy books to school daily. What if there is a good way to improve this situation?

Perhaps not many know about the Khan Academy, which I think is the future of our education. Some schools overseas are already incorporating Khan’s method into their school system. Khan Academy is a free online course consisting of thousands of video courses on almost anything. The question is how can these videos help to revolutionise our education? The founder of Khan Academy, Sal Khan, envisioned a future where students watched and learnt from videos with educational materials at home. Teachers would monitor each student’s progress. Some students are fast learners and others are slow. This is a system that enables everyone to learn at his or her own pace.

Now you might ask: what do students do in school then? These students would be answering questions, doing exercises in classrooms and asking their teachers to explain what they cannot understand from the videos. Their homework would be done at school, while the learning would be done at home. Isn’t this what the Government aims to do? Teachers would work only as assistants to students who may have problems in their studies. There is no need to go for tuition anymore as every student can learn at his/her own pace

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by stopping the video play anytime or repeating the play. Students would not feel ashamed to repeat the play of content at home. Indeed, I see the Khan Academy as a very promising system to replace our current educational system.

But there are problems, however. Firstly, how do we make sure that students study at home by watching the educational videos? For students who do not appreciate the Khan system, it may be a waste of time. Secondly, the system requires every family to own a computer, or at least a tablet, with Internet access. This may be a problem with poor families. But if we know we can save from not having to pay tuition fees every month, it is worthwhile to buy a computer.

I really hope this idea will be taken up by the Education Ministry. For a start, this system could be implemented like the Dual Language Programme. One class from any level could be put under the Khan system, and students for this test run selected by their teachers. This will reduce problems arising from implementing a new syllabus.

**HSY**  
**Kuala Lumpur**

Adapted from: H, SY (2018, January 15). Future is online for education. *Letters*, <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2018/01/15/future-is-online-for-education/>

[100 marks]

2. Based on the selected excerpt, describe the elements of purpose, audience, tone and attitude of Leonard Pitts in his writing.

A question.

Can a man be put in jail for what he's thinking?

Before you answer, you should know that what the man in question was thinking is about as offensive as it gets.

Like child pornography. Twenty-two-year-old Brian Dalton, a Columbus Ohio man, was convicted in 1998 of possessing sexually explicit photographs. He served a few months before being released on probation. And there the matter have ended, except for what his probation officer found during a routine search of Dalton's home. Namely, Dalton's personal diary, which contained a 14-page story about three kids, ages 10 and 11, who are imprisoned, tortured and molested.

The story was fictional, the product of a diseased imagination. Yet it was said to be so vivid and vile that grand jurors who indicted Dalton asked a

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detective to stop reading from the diary after only two pages. Dalton wrote the tale for his personal use; there is no evidence he ever planned to disseminate it.

Not that this mattered when he was tried earlier this month under a state law allowing the prosecution of those found in possession of any pornographic material involving children. In other words, not just photos of real images, but written fantasies, drawings, even, conceivably computer-generated images, of children who do not exist. Under a plea bargain, Dalton will spend almost nine years in jail.

And that, friends and neighbours, is simply, frighteningly, wrong.

If you disagree, well, I can certainly understand. It is sickening to contemplate sympathy for a man like Dalton. But sympathy is not the point. Dalton is not even the point. Rather, the point is that what just happened represents a clear and present danger to the rights you and I enjoy as United States citizens.

Funny thing about those rights. They are so much a part of us that we take them for granted. Indeed, sometimes our attitude toward them is downright inconsiderate – especially when we are talking about them in the context of horrible others. It is hard to imagine, for instance, that many of us would feature a government attempt to decide what we, personally, were allowed to see, say or think. But some would willingly allow the same intrusion upon others because we find them and their beliefs disgusting. In allowing that intrusion, such people seldom see that they are betrayed by their own dislike, persuaded to make a narrow argument and miss its broad implications: if government is allowed to do it to “them”, what stops the government from doing it to you?

As a fan of the written word – and, not incidentally, as someone who makes his living from it – I find what just happened chilling. Under this broadly written statute, a serious writer who explores the subject of child pornography could be subject to the same fate that befell Dalton. And how is this for irony: the guy got probation after being convicted of possessing pornographic photos of real children. He is looking at almost nine years for writing private thoughts about fictitious ones.

No one would argue that the government does not have convincing reasons to keep checks on Brian Dalton. He deserves punishment for his original crime. And treatment for his sickness. Children must be protected from him. But those goals could be accomplished without the constitutionally definite means of the state has chosen.

Dalton’s attorney, Isabella Dixon, says she may try to withdraw his guilty plea. He accepted the plea bargain, she has said, only because he “felt it was in his best interest at the time”. So far, she has declined comment on her role in that decision.

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So there the matter sits. I will not ask you to feel sorry for Dalton. I sure do not. But I will ask you to consider the fact that there is nothing predetermined about the rights we take for granted. That they can be nibbled away until they are gone.

And if you doubt that, you might want to consider again that question: Can a man be put in jail for what he is thinking?

He already has.

Adapted from: Pitts, L. (2007). Should a man be put in jail for what he's thinking? In McCraney, L. *An introduction to critical reading*. (pp. 244-246). United States of America: Wadsworth Cengage Learning

[100 marks]

3. In making an argument, it is essential to identify and to use appropriate evidence. Four common kinds of evidence include the use of facts or statistics, personal experience, authority and values. Explain, with examples, any TWO of them.

[100 marks]

4. The interpretation of a text can be related to three levels of context: the immediate, the institutional and the wider social context. Describe any TWO levels of contextual information and substantiate your answer using appropriate examples.

[100 marks]

5. Read the following excerpt by Steven Rhoads and then answer the questions that follow.

The problem with honouring fathers who do what mothers usually do – what used to be called “mothering” – is this: it suggests that fathers who do not do what *most* fathers do are not contributing to their children’s well-being. Yet we know this cannot be true. Children who grow up in fatherless families are poorer, less healthy, less educated. They die much earlier, commit more crimes and give birth to more babies out of wedlock.

What do most real-world dads do? When the kids get old enough, they teach them how to build and fix things and how to play sports. They are better than moms at teaching children how to deal with novelty and frustration, perhaps because they are more likely than mothers to encourage children to work out problems and address challenges themselves – from putting on their shoes to operating a new toy.

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When kids become older still, Dad is usually better than Mom in controlling unruly boys. Jennifer Morse, in her book *Love and Economics: Why the Laissez-Faire Family Doesn't Work*, notes that all the surveys of who does what around the house never mentions of her husband's most important functions – he is responsible for glaring. When their son acts up, his glares just seem to have more effect than hers do. Similarly, a fascinating study in the journal *Criminology* finds that female social ties in a neighbourhood are associated with much lower crime rates. Male social ties in the neighbourhood have no effect on crime rates. But the beneficial effect of female ties almost completely disappears in communities dominated by fatherless families! You need husbands and fathers – if the crime-fighting female ties are really to be effective. Perhaps mothers still say, “Just you wait until your father gets home,” or its equivalent.

Sometimes moms worry that their rough-housing husbands are making their boys more aggressive. But, in fact, fathers are teaching their sons how to play fight - do not bite, do not kick, stay away from the eyes - a form of play enjoyed by most boys around the world. On the playground, boys without fathers in the home are unpopular because they respond in a truly aggressive manner when other boys try to initiate rough-and-tumble play. The Board on Children, Youth and Families of the National Research Council has concluded that “fathers, in effect, give children practice in regulating their own emotions and recognizing others' emotional cues”.

Of course, dads do a lot for their daughters as well. For example, by providing a model of love for and fidelity to their wives, dads give teenage girls confidence that they can expect men to be interested in them for reasons beyond sex.

We could begin to do dads justice if we realised that their nature makes it unlikely that they will like intensive nurturing in the way that most mothers do. Testosterone inhibits nurturing. In both men and women high levels of testosterone are associated with less interest in babies. Low levels of testosterone are associated with a stronger than average interest in nurturing. If you inject a monkey mother with testosterone, she becomes less interested in her baby. And men have much more testosterone than women. Thus, in those two-career families where husband and wife are determined to share domestic and paid work equally, a common argument ensues because dads typically suggest that they get more paid child-care help; moms typically want less paid help and more time with their children.

If dads were as tormented as moms by prolonged absence from their children, we would have more unhappiness and more fights over who gets to spend time with the children. By faithfully working at often boring jobs to provide for their families, dads make possible moms who can do less paid

work and thereby produce less stressed and happier households. Dads deserve a lot of credit for simply making moms' nurturing of children possible. On Father's Day we should more often notice, and then honour, typical fatherly virtues.

Adapted from: Rhoads, S. (2012). What fathers do best? In Yagelski, R. and Miller, R. *The informed argument*. (pp. 308-310). United States of America: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

- [a] The original publication of this argument was intended to correspond with Father's Day. Do you think the timing of the publication of the excerpt might shape readers' reactions to it? Why?
- [20 marks]
- [b] What assumptions about gender expectations are built into the author's arguments? Explain.
- [40 marks]
- [c] In his conclusion, Rhoads suggests an image of "fathers faithfully working at often boring jobs to provide for their families". How does this image fit his main argument about fathers?
- [40 marks]

6. Study the following student project by Dylan Ellis. Is it well-written? Elaborate your reasons using relevant examples from the excerpt.

Student Name: Dylan Ellis  
Lecturer: Professor Ruszkiewicz  
Course: RHE 315 (Visual Rhetoric)

“June 23, 1989”

I have many different memories tied to the director Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989) – from seeing it the first time, to acting it out in my living room, filling in the colouring book, and quoting the lines. The movie became iconic to me. Perhaps no piece of advertising or marketing captures the entire experience and allure of *Batman Better* than its original one-sheet teaser poster. The image speaks volumes by giving away very little, but behind its initial message are layers of meaning tied to both the film and the character of Batman himself.

Of course the first thing a viewer of the poster notices is the emblem. It is a completely new interpretation of the Bat-logo, a far cry from the cartoonish item seen in the 1960s television show. Intriguingly, the logo is cut off at the ends, but this slight omission is not a mistake. If the entire logo were displayed on the poster, the image could not be nearly as large and striking. Indeed, the fact that the creator of the poster chose size and boldness over presenting a whole image is significant. In essence, a mere poster cannot contain the Bat-logo: it is too powerful. Eliminating the tips of the emblem even gives it a sense of motion, as if it were bursting out of the poster. To an extent, the creator used the limitations placed on him by the standard dimensions and alignment of a typical movie poster to an advantage.

A viewer notices, too, that the *Batman* logo is not placed vertically in the dead center of the frame, but raised slightly above the middle of the poster. Certainly the image could have been centered, and there would have still been room for what little text is at the bottom. Instead, the emblem looms at the top of the poster, much like *Batman* as he surveys Gotham City perched on the building-tops in the darkness. Thus the poster takes on specific attributes of *Batman*. It is mysterious just as he is, shrouded in secrecy, finding solace in anonymity.

Of course the emblem also screams ferocity in the way it is made to resemble a bat with its wings open; however, this interpretation is far more stylised than an actual picture of a bat would be. The bottom of the logo looks

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like the teeth of some monster just before it devours its prey. The top resembles Batman's mask and headpiece with its sharply pointed ears. The sides obviously evoke the image of a bat's wings as it soars. Furthermore, the emblem is razor-sharp. Each point – and there are nine of them – looks as if it would prick you if you could reach your hand into the poster and touch the tip. These serrations convey a feeling of boldness and contrast starkly with the gold behind them.

The logo also sparkles in the light. It seems pristine and untouched, perhaps brand new, hinting that this will be an original story. To me, the gold and the flares of light signify Batman's wealth and his access to do so many resources. (Poor college student Peter Parker, also known as Spider Man, surely could not afford a logo this nice). Moreover, gold is the only colour in the entire poster. Much like the film, the image is dark, amplifying what little colour there is.

Looking at the original poster as a whole, a viewer sees only the logo and the text, "June 23". The line tells us that the film opens on June 23 while the logo says everything else. Nowhere on the poster does the word "Batman" appear, yet we still know. And though this poster might be have been a new design for the Bat-logo, it holds true to key traits so that the viewers would know exactly what it advertises. The creator uses knowledge viewers already have of the character to redefine their ideas about batman. Advertising firms only the dream of this level of brand recognition.

Just as important as establishing trademark identification, the whole poster aligns with the tone of the film. It may have been the first piece of marketing anyone saw for the film, so it had to tell viewers what to expect by igniting their excitement and debunking the previous incarnation of the Caped Crusader - namely they campy 60s television show with its manufactured sound effects and hokey plot lines. The movie certainly boasted star-power with Jack Nicholson receiving top billing in the film as well as then-young maverick director Tim Burton helming the project fresh off his success with the movie *Beetlejuice*; yet their names are nowhere on the this initial poster thought they appear in later versions. Yet this absence of details arouses curiosity and exudes confidence.

Batman's contributions to the status of comic-book and super hero movies are immeasurable. But everything began with this image. The *Batman* poster introduced the film to the public. And its influence on poster art can still be seen today: where would *Superman* and *Spider Man* be without it?

Adapted from:  
Ruszkiewicz, J., Anderson, D. & Friend, C. (2009). *Beyond words (cultural texts for reading and writing)*.  
Pearson: United States of America

[100 marks]