

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Second Semester Examination
Academic Session 2004/2005

March 2005

HEK 222 – Critical Reading and Writing

Duration : 3 hours

Please check that this examination paper consists of SIX pages of printed material before you begin the examination.

Answer ALL questions. Equal marks are allocated to all questions.

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1. Assess the following text on "The importance of play to children." You should pay particular attention to the following elements:

- [a] Purpose
- [b] Audience
- [c] Language
- [d] Tone
- [e] Style

Importance of Play to Children

There is no truer maxim than the one that says 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' The saying acknowledges the age-old wisdom that a child's life is empty or meaningless without play. This is the first reason why play is important to a child. Play brings it happiness. Watch a child playing and you can see it smiling or even laughing with happiness. It may be something as simple as kicking a ball about but the child's whoops of joy tell us about the gladness the child is feeling without it having to be expressed in words.

Another reason why play is important to children is that it acts a safety valve for any pent-up feelings of frustration, anger, resentment, disappointment, etc. which it may harbour. There are many things in a child's life that can give rise to such negative and potentially destructive feelings. When a child is denied something, an ice-cream for instance, it feels frustrated and angry. Another example is a child, who is not given permission to do something it wants, may feel resentment or hatred towards the one who is withholding that permission. Failure can also give rise to feelings of frustration and disappointment, and at this stage of development most children, not possessing the knowledge and skill of adults, are very likely to fail in many things they attempt to do. In all these cases, play may help the child to work these negative emotions out of its system.

Certain types of play also have beneficial effects on a child's physical health. Games such as hide-and-seek, hopscotch, cops and robbers and many others involve a lot of bodily movement which can contribute positively to the improvement of the muscle tone and the cardiovascular system of a child. This fact can be condensed as 'The child who plays is a healthy child.'

Certain types of play require a child to assume certain roles. The child playing 'doctor,' 'teacher,' 'nurse' or 'shopkeeper' is actually rehearsing for adult life later on. So, it is not too far-fetched to conclude that this type of play is a preparation for the role the child may assume on reaching adulthood.

Play actually has a socialising effect on children. Children have few opportunities to meet other than when they play together. They learn to behave in a way that is acceptable to society. They learn to say 'Thank you,' to say 'Sorry,' to share, to be engaged in cooperative efforts and to show sympathy and empathy for each other. So, play ensures that children do not grow up to be misfits in society.

So, from this you can see that there is nothing childish about play for children but it is something to be taken seriously.

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2. EITHER

- [a] The following is an article adapted from *Utusan Consumer* giving its author's views about water supply. Read it and make an assessment of it. You should pay particular attention to the arguments (if any) and use of rhetorical devices such as persuaders and emotive language.

Water Supply

There is mounting pressure on our water supply. The recent water shortage and the Subsequent rationing of water even in places where there had never been a need to do so should sound warning bells. The first and the biggest demand made on our water supply is our fast-expanding population. As our population grows, there is a greater demand for water for washing, cooking, drinking and other purposes. Our current supply of water also has to satisfy the increasing demands made by a growing agricultural sector. During the recent economic downturn, it was discovered that a great part of our expenditure was for importing food. This made the government realise that it had to shift part of its emphasis on economic development to the agricultural sector. Apart from this, inconsiderate consumer behaviour also taxes our water supply to the limit. Washing a car with a hose and doing the dishes under a running tap are examples of using water wastefully. There is, therefore, a genuine need to conserve our water supply. 5

The first place to do it is in the bathroom. Discard your high-flow shower head and opt for a low-flow one. Convert your single-flush toilet into a dual-flush one. Repair leaking taps immediately. Turn off the tap while you are brushing your teeth or while shaving. Do not wash vegetables under a running tap. Fill the basin with the amount of water required and then wash the vegetables in the water collected. 10

To do your laundry, use a front-loading washing machine and not a top-loading one. A front loader saves significant amounts of water, besides conserving energy and detergent. You also save water if you wash a full load of clothes instead of just a few items of clothing. 20

You can also save water in the garden. Firstly, group plants with the same water needs in the same place. Plants which need less water should be put apart from those that require more. Do not water the plants in the heat of the day as much of it will be wasted as evaporation. Also 25

avoid watering your plants on a windy day as much of it would only be blown away. Do not cut your lawn shorter than four centimetres so that their blades can shade each other. Watering your plants with rainwater is ideal. See if you can install a rainwater tank. Another thing is if you have already spent a lot of money building a swimming pool, try to save some on water by covering the pool to reduce evaporation. 30

(Adapted from *Utusan Konsumer*, July 1999)

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OR

- [b] Explain (at least 5 examples/ways) how a critical reader would be able to distinguish persuasion that takes place through the use of tricks or appeals to the emotions from persuasion that takes place through the offering of sound evidence and arguments for a belief. You may use the following text on "Depression in Women" to support your answer.

Depression in Women

It is experienced by one in ten adults every year. There are twice as many women sufferers as men. It is depression, a mental illness characterised by a prolonged feeling of sadness and hopelessness. A depressed person feels that life is simply not worth living and there is nothing he or she can do about it. In a 1990 study, WHO (World Health Organisation) discovered that 12% of the women and 6% of the men in industrialised countries are afflicted with depression. In fact, depression is so prevalent among women that it is the leading cause of disease and death among women.

Mental health experts have established that depression among women is individualistic and each case is different from another. It means that the cause of one woman's depression may be chemical and the cause of another's may be the result of stress or trauma in life.

Many theories have been put forth to explain why women are more predisposed to depression than men. One of the theories is that a woman's life is more full of emotional ups and downs as well as challenges that are unique to a woman.

One of the factors cited by worldwide research for the greater vulnerability of women to depression is the greater responsibilities of home and work. While most men merely have to cope with the pressure of work, many women have to cope not only with the pressures of work but also that of homemaking. Besides facing the problems of holding a full-time job, they have to cope with the responsibilities of household chores and bringing up children. It is not surprising that many crack under such seemingly insurmountable pressure. Even if a woman just has to take care of the home and bring up her children, boredom may set in after a few years of this and the woman becomes depressed without her knowing why.

The traditional upbringing of girls is also a contributory factor. Such an upbringing results in a pessimistic attitude towards life, low self-esteem and a feeling of having little or no control over the events influencing their lives. So girls grow up with the notion that happiness is not their birthright, that they are the less important sex and that they are powerless to change any situation that is the source of their misery. This feeling of worthlessness is aggravated when they are discriminated against in educational opportunities, their status in society and promotions in their workplace.

Another well-known causative factor is that women go through many major biological changes throughout their lifetime. They are, in order of occurrence, the onset of menstruation, pregnancy, postpartum and menopause. These changes force a woman to go through a hormonal metamorphosis that triggers depression in her. At these times, a woman's hormones seem to go haywire and depression and other emotional disturbances are the eventual result.

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3. EITHER

- [a] The "Questioning the Author" (Beck et.al 1997) approach has been claimed to be an effective approach to get readers to become actively involved as they read.

Do you agree or disagree? Provide examples (course handouts/readings) to support your answer.

OR

- [b] What is reading from a Critical Stance? How can one read from a critical stance? You may use the ideas suggested by McLaughlin and Devoogd (2004) on critical literacy as comprehension to support your answer.

4. Using the framework offered by Kress (1985) or Wallace (1993) on critical reading, evaluate the following text on "Approaches to Using the Internet in the Classroom."

Approaches to Using the Internet in the Classroom

Understanding that the Internet does have a relevance in the teaching of English is only the start, of course. Few teachers have experience of the medium and most will have to spend time becoming familiar with how to navigate and use it. It is worth reflecting, therefore, on some fruitful approaches to its use in the classroom.

While much is made of the volume of information available on the Internet, at the same time this is one of its greatest disadvantages. There is nothing more disheartening for a child than to be confronted with a mountain of information—how does he or she find what they are looking for? The number of *search engines*, sites that index the Internet and provide a keyword search facility, is ever increasing, but this is counterproductive when the search engines provide thousands of references as a result of a simple enquiry.

Encouraging students to search the Internet needs careful forethought by teachers. If the teacher wishes the child to find some specific information, the teacher will need to know that it exists and its location. In this instance, that location can be provided either as a page reference or via a set of "bookmarks," shortcuts that are stored in the Web browser. This latter is particularly useful for children who are new to the Internet, as it provides a structured search that the teacher knows will be successful. In other circumstances, it may be that an unstructured approach is more fruitful in that different children will find different texts which, taken together, will provide a richer set of resources than with

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the structured approach—and the teacher does not have to do the search in advance. The serendipitous approach can also throw up materials that are not strictly what is required but that can create new avenues of interest. For example, searching on *planets* as part of a discursive essay could reveal that there is a piece of music that has the same name. This could open up a discussion about how different media convey similar information.

Another issue is what one does with information obtained from the Internet. With most browsers, it is possible to save any element of an Internet text to disk, making it available for incorporation into a child's own text. Recrafting texts for a different audience, purpose, or genre provides an important means of enabling children to reflect on reading and writing. Providing them with tasks that require the collection and transformation of Internet and other texts can be a powerful way of getting the best out of the Internet. It also overcomes a problem that is in evidence no matter which medium is being used—that of students just copying chunks of text and reproducing them unchanged in another format. For example, saving the different contributions from a discussion group or newsgroup to disk and then turning the different articles into a newspaper report requires a clear understanding of the issues being discussed, of the difference in the nature of the audiences, and of the language demands that the different media make.

The last example makes the point eloquently that the use of the Internet need not be distinct from other work in the classroom. The Internet can be used as a means of exploring aspects of language normally associated with print-based literacy as well as in its own right. For example, it has been observed frequently that children writing text, which will be published on the Internet, take a great deal of care about spelling and punctuation; when collaborating with others whose first language is not English, there is often an awareness of using language that the intended user of the text will understand. Considerations such as these may be important when accepting offers from other schools to collaborate on specific projects.

An increasing number of education sites on the Internet provide places where like-minded teachers and children from around the world can meet, and they often provide projects that can be undertaken collaboratively. A benefit of using such sites is that there are frequently teachers and children who are more experienced in the use of the Internet. One extremely powerful language activity for children is to prepare a guide to the use of the Internet for others who are less experienced. Another benefit of such sites is that they frequently offer good ideas for exploiting the Internet in teaching and learning.