

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Peperiksaan Semester Kedua  
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**HEK 221- Critical Reading and Writing**

Masa : 3 jam

**THIS EXAMINATION PAPER CONTAINS FOUR [4] QUESTIONS IN FIVE [5] PAGES.**

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

1. Assess the following article by answering these Questions.

- [a] What is the text about?
- [b] What kind of audience is being addressed?
- [c] Does it contain any argument [s] or is it merely a collection of persuasive assertions and opinions?
- [d] How would you react to the ideas/arguments in the article?
- [e] Has the author used rhetorical devices such as persuaders and emotive language? Are they effective?

...2/-

### Kicking the TV Habit

The most influential invention of the century, television, has softened our minds and hardened our hearts. In America, by the time the average child finishes elementary school, he or she will have seen 8,000 TV murders, 100,000 violent incidents and countless commercials. Once, families would gather for the evening and discuss the day's events; today, they sit in silence, staring vacantly at the television set, alone in their private worlds. Is this how we want to educate future generations? For our world to mature, both children and adults must learn to think for themselves. If we don't want to become a planet of **couch potatoes**, we must turn the television off!

Only 50 years ago there was no TV to watch-only books to read, people to talk to and real, untelevised life to experience. When researchers questioned teachers who had taught children both before and after the introduction of TV, the teachers consistently remarked that children brought up on TV had lost the ability to imagine pictures and continually complained when a book didn't have illustrations. Not surprisingly, reading test scores and attention spans have been dropping consistently year after year.

The images that come from TV overpower the images the mind creates. The mind slows its processing activity to a level closer to sleep than to **consciousness**. TV- watching requires none of the interaction of reading, only open eyes and ears to absorb whatever the networks are broadcasting. The overall result is a more passive relationship with the world and with events. How can one ever feel **empowered** to change anything for the better when life appears to happen inside a metal box? When parents read to their children, they can comfort, interpret and explain. All too often in the modern world, parents use TV as a babysitter, letting their children sit in front of the tube alone to **decipher** these fast-moving, confusing sounds and images. Children often **mimic** what they hear on TV; this may make them sound intelligent, but they lack the understanding of facts and concepts to receive anything of real use. The result is that children learn to speak in an artificial and even unfriendly manner. All too often parents assume that their children are getting the same advantages they do from TV, but they overlook the fact that children don't have the same life experiences to relate to, nor can children properly **differentiate** between TV and reality. Just ask a young child where the people on TV go when the switch is turned off.

It doesn't take a genius to realize that when children grow up with too much television they become adults who lack both intellectual and emotional development. Unfortunately, the effects are hidden because nearly everyone has been raised on TV; however, one effect seen again and again around the world is that of children imitating what they see on TV, ending at times in murder and suicide.

...3/-

As parents realize the devastating effects TV has on their children, they are, in greater and greater numbers, limiting its use, or even shutting it off permanently. One mother decide to unplug her set for a month when she noticed her children becoming ruder and more **sarcastic** in their speech and behavior. After depriving her family of the TV, she found her children more interested in reading, doing better in their studies and being nicer and more genuine. Surprisingly, when the TV was reconnected, the children continued with their books and other productive activities.

Parents admit that, without TV, raising children would take more effort, but parenting was never meant to be as easy as pressing a button. Even though it may go against the habits so many of us have developed, we need to start thinking about doing what is best for ourselves, our families and our society. Let's kick the TV habit and reclaim our lives!

2. Would you agree that the critical reading procedure offered by Kress (1985) can be related to the three phases of reading, that is pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. You may use the following text to support your answer.

Dear Sir

Why are our universities and colleges full of foreign students? Why can't they stay at home instead of coming here and taking places away from our sons and daughters?

We hear a lot from the government about increasing the number of students in higher education. But when you look at the colleges and universities, you find them full of foreign students. I think this is wrong. We should give priority to our own students.

Not only do these foreigners take up university places. They also fill up accommodation so that it is difficult for our own students to find places to live. Also, most of these students have a lot of money so they can afford to pay high prices for somewhere to live. This means that home students can't afford accommodation.

I wonder what these students give in return for their time here? They come and study and take our ideas and then they return home and set up new factories. Because they have cheap labour, they can out-price us and before you know what has happened, our industries are ruined. The people who benefit are their fellow countrymen, not us.

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I think the government is wrong to encourage foreign students to come here. They should stay in their own countries and allow us to give our own children the education that they and their country need.

Yours faithfully  
[Name and address supplied]

3. Luke and Freebody (1997) claim that Critical Reading is not about "higher cognitive processing", affective or personal response", "deconstruction" or "linguistic analysis." It is about developing ways of seeing through texts, their descriptions of cultures and worlds, and how they are trying to position you to be part of these cultures and worlds."

Evaluate their claim. Provide examples.

4. 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 to support your answer.

### **I Blame the Teachers**

Not a day goes by without the usual media headlines informing us of yet more disquieting facts and figures on football hooliganism, drug abuse, child sexual abuse, muggings, rapings and murder. But whenever I hear of a criminal brought to justice I always feel the real criminals go free. Who do I mean? I mean the teaching profession. They know that hidden in their well protected ranks are the people who regularly criminalise the next generation. Not many people will agree with this philosophy but personal experience has reinforced it for me time and time again.

If a child comes into school at the tender age of five or less, from a deprived home with socially inadequate parents schooling will do nothing for him. Indeed it will often exacerbate his problems. Very soon a psychologically unsound teacher will use that child as a scapegoat-the means of keeping the rest of the class in order despite their boredom.

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I know this because I've been a scapegoat (although my home wasn't deprived and my parents were socially adequate). I know this because my three children were always in classes where it happened. I know this because my husband was a schoolteacher until utter disillusionment made him throw in the towel. Ask any individual and they can all name a scapegoat, from their schooldays. Ask any individual teacher and they will admit it privately: 'of course it goes on' they say, 'but what can I do about it? They plead.

I also have written evidence in my postbag every day of the week. Working for an educational organization is heartrending work. The stories of scapegoating and humiliation in our schools make dreadful daily reading.

...Now, years later, the children that my children saw beaten, humiliated, ridiculed and generally demoralized make news in the local newspapers at thieves, drunks and general hellraisers. They are, of course, punished but the real criminals are still highly respected members of the community and no doubt continue to criminalise their present disadvantaged pupils as do so many members of the highly protected teaching profession. As I said, the real criminals go free. And I say it on behalf of all those who aren't free to do so.

(Janet Everdell, *Guardian*, 30 September 1986, p. 11, column 1)

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