



Handling the GCE 'O' Levels 2018 English Paper

The following are the essay questions from the 2018 O Level English Paper 1, according to feedback from several of our students and other sources.

The paper veered away from the usual mix of personal expository, discursive and argumentative options. You will notice that, for once, there are no argumentative nor pure discursive options. This time round, every question has a personal and/or descriptive aspect.

On the one hand, the personal slant makes it easier for the student to surface points from their experiences (and content can take on a more analogous/ anecdotal perspective). A more personal voice and informal tone also seem permissible.

On the other hand, however, students might fall into the trap of using less elegant expression. Thus, it might be harder to score well in the language marks. Content can also be more superficial because of the less formal way each question has been framed.

However, the content to each essay topic has the potential to be elevated and the student who structures and expresses his ideas more eloquently will stand apart from the masses.

You are advised to write between 350 and 500 words on **one** of the following topics.

1. Describe an event you looked forward to which turned out to be disappointing.
Explain why you were excited about it and why it did not live up to your expectations.
2. "I've never seen my friend laugh so much." Write about a time when this happened.
3. Some people like to stand out from the crowd, others just want to be part of it.
Which do you prefer and why?
4. Which modern invention is essential to you and your family, and which one could you and your family live without? Explain your views.

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Tackling the Questions

1. Describe an event you looked forward to which turned out to be disappointing. Explain why you were excited about it and why it did not live up to your expectations.
 - Describe--this question requires strong descriptive language.

The essay must include a vivid description of the emotions of excitement and disappointment as well as the factors/ features of the event that potentially excited yet disappointed to the writer/ speaker.

- an event--one/ as singular event, not a series of activities or days unless they are part of that singular event. Clearly state what the event is and describe the setting and activities involved.
- explain why 'looked forward'/ 'excited'--was there much hype/ preparation/ hard work and effort leading to the event?
- explain why 'failed to live up to expectations'/ 'disappointed'--what went wrong? Describe in detail what the expectations were and how they were not met. Who or what caused the disappointment?

An example detailing a disappointing concert: <https://www.todayonline.com/gnr-concert-goers-loved-band-hated-gig-experience>

2. "I've never seen my friend laugh so much." Write about a time when this happened.
 - my friend--one friend, not a group
 - never seen--why? This is an opportunity to mould an interesting character. Has your friend been sad/depressed for some time? Why? OR was your friend serious by nature?
 - a time--one occasion; the time should be a single event or episode, *not* a series of activities
 - laugh so much--describe the uninhibited laughter, the hilarity. What event or occurrence caused this laughter.

Here are some ideas you can use:

An embarrassing situation at your expense? Or did it happen to a teacher/ your friend's arch rival?

Watching a very funny scene from a movie or episode of Just for Laughs?

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Friends: Rachel's Bridesmaid Moment:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UI_UuSI3yK0

3. Some people like to stand out from the crowd, others just want to be part of it.
Which do you prefer and why?

- stand out--be prominent/noticeable/conspicuous/distinctive, attract attention
- part of the crowd--blend in with the masses, be inconspicuous, go unnoticed
- which do you prefer? --Essentially the question asks for the reasons and factors for wanting to be noticed or not. You can also choose to say that it depends and explain the circumstances. You should support your reasons with examples too.

Standing out from the crowd	Being part of the crowd
1. Personality: sociable/ extroverted, enjoy being with others and love the limelight Prefer to initiate activity	1. Personality: shy / timid/ introverted and prefer to avoid the limelight Like to observe the scene/ people watch
2. Personality: enjoy leadership positions, have ideas and initiatives that need to be heard	2. Personality: team-player, prefer to work with others rather than spearhead ideas
3. Interests: talent/ skill to showcase that often needs an audience eg: musician, performance art	3. Interests: tend to be quieter and/or solitary activities eg: reading, visual art, online activities

4. Which modern invention is essential to you and your family, and which one could you and your family live without? Explain your views.

- modern invention--a modern invention often involves new technology
- essential--of absolute/ fundamental necessity, very important/ significant
- to you and your family--this is the crucial criteria that you need to fulfill in giving your reasons. Why the invention is important can be due to several reasons such as: improving family ties and connectivity, pertains to an activity that is loved by all in the family, used daily by all in the family

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Some examples to draw from:

Essential modern invention, and why essential	Inessential modern invention and why not essential
Text/Whatsapp applications Video conferencing on smartphones Reason: keeps the family members highly connected and constantly communicating. Particularly crucial if a few members are overseas.	Hair dryer Reason: family of practical, no-fuss folks who do not have the time nor interest in blow-drying their hair
Rice cooker Reason: rice is the staple that all the family eats. One meal a day/week together. Does the meal involve the extended family too?	Ice-cream maker Reason: while the family loves ice-cream, no one has the time nor inclination to make it. OR, the family dislikes ice-cream/ is lactose intolerant
Microwave oven Reason: hectic schedules for all; teen children of the family heat up pre-cooked food	Microwave oven Reason: parents believe in eating fresh and well. Hence a ban on the microwave

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