

## 1. Festivals

**Most people have forgotten the meaning behind traditional or religious festivals; during festival periods, people nowadays only want to enjoy themselves.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?**

Some people argue that we no longer remember the original meaning of festivals, and that most of us treat them as opportunities to have fun. While I agree that enjoyment seems to be the priority during festival times, I do not agree that people have forgotten what these festivals mean.

On the one hand, religious and traditional festivals have certainly become times for celebration. In the UK, Christmas is a good example of a festival period when people are most concerned with shopping, giving and receiving presents, decorating their homes and enjoying traditional meals with their families. Most people look forward to Christmas as a holiday period, rather than a time to practise religion. Similar behaviour can be seen during non-religious festivals, such as Bonfire Night. People associate this occasion with making fires, watching firework displays, and perhaps going to large events in local parks; in other words, enjoyment is people's primary goal.

However, I disagree with the idea that the underlying meaning of such festivals has been forgotten. In UK primary schools, children learn in detail about the religious reasons for celebrating Christmas, Easter and a variety of festivals in other religions. For example, in late December, children sing Christmas songs which have a religious content, and they may even perform nativity plays telling the story of Jesus' birth. Families also play a role in passing knowledge of religious festivals' deeper significance on to the next generation. The same is true for festivals that have a historical background, such as Bonfire Night or Halloween, in the sense that people generally learn the stories behind these occasions at an early age.

In conclusion, although people mainly want to enjoy themselves during festivals, I believe that they are still aware of the reasons for these celebrations.

## 2. Extreme sports

**Extreme sports such as sky diving and skiing are very dangerous and should be banned.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?**

In recent years, extreme sports have become increasingly popular, and some people argue that governments should prohibit them. I completely disagree with the idea that these sports are too dangerous, and I therefore believe that they should not be banned.

In my opinion, so-called extreme sports are not as dangerous as many people think. All sports involve some element of risk, and there should always be clear regulations and safety procedures to reduce the possibility of accidents. People who take part in extreme sports are usually required to undergo appropriate training so that the dangers are minimised. For example, anyone who wants to try skydiving will need to sign up for lessons with a registered club, and beginners are not allowed to dive solo; they must be accompanied by an experienced professional. Finally, the protective equipment and technology used in sports from motor racing to mountain climbing is constantly improving safety.

While I support regulations and safety measures, I believe that it would be wrong, and almost impossible, to ban extreme sports. In the first place, we should all be free to decide how we spend our leisure time; as long as we understand the risks, I do not believe that politicians should stop us from enjoying ourselves. However, an even stronger argument against such a ban would be the difficulty of enforcing it. Many of the most risky sports, like base jumping or big wave surfing, are practised far away from the reach of any authorities. I cannot imagine the police being called to stop people from parachuting off a mountain face or surfing on an isolated beach.

In conclusion, I would argue that people should be free to enjoy extreme sports as long as they understand the risks and take the appropriate precautions.

### 3. Responsibilities of businesses

**As well as making money, businesses also have social responsibilities.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Businesses have always sought to make a profit, but it is becoming increasingly common to hear people talk about the social obligations that companies have. I completely agree with the idea that businesses should do more for society than simply make money.

On the one hand, I accept that businesses must make money in order to survive in a competitive world. It seems logical that the priority of any company should be to cover its running costs, such as employees' wages and payments for buildings and utilities. On top of these costs, companies also need to invest in improvements and innovations if they wish to remain successful. If a company is unable to pay its bills or meet the changing needs of customers, any concerns about social responsibilities become irrelevant. In other words, a company can only make a positive contribution to society if it is in good financial health.

On the other hand, companies should not be run with the sole aim of maximising profit; they have a wider role to play in society. One social obligation that owners and managers have is to treat their employees well, rather than exploiting them. For example, they could pay a "living wage" to ensure that workers have a good quality of life. I also like the idea that businesses could use a proportion of their profits to support local charities, environmental projects or education initiatives. Finally, instead of trying to minimise their tax payments by using accounting loopholes, I believe that company bosses should be happy to contribute to society through the tax system.

In conclusion, I believe that companies should place as much importance on their social responsibilities as they do on their financial objectives.

#### 4. Climate change

**Some people think that instead of preventing climate change, we need to find a way to live with it.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Climate change represents a major threat to life on Earth, but some people argue that we need to accept it rather than try to stop it. I completely disagree with this opinion, because I believe that we still have time to tackle this issue and reduce the human impact on the Earth's climate.

There are various measures that governments and individuals could take to prevent, or at least mitigate, climate change. Governments could introduce laws to limit the carbon dioxide emissions that lead to global warming. They could impose “green taxes” on drivers, airline companies and other polluters, and they could invest in renewable energy production from solar, wind or water power. As individuals, we should also try to limit our contribution to climate change, by becoming more energy efficient, by flying less, and by using bicycles and public transport. Furthermore, the public can affect the actions of governments by voting for politicians who propose to tackle climate change, rather than for those who would prefer to ignore it.

If instead of taking the above measures we simply try to live with climate change, I believe that the consequences will be disastrous. To give just one example, I am not optimistic that we would be able to cope with even a small rise in sea levels. Millions of people would be displaced by flooding, particularly in countries that do not have the means to safeguard low-lying areas. These people would lose their homes and their jobs, and they would be forced to migrate to nearby cities or perhaps to other countries. The potential for human suffering would be huge, and it is likely that we would see outbreaks of disease and famine, as well as increased homelessness and poverty.

In conclusion, it is clear to me that we must address the problem of climate change, and I disagree with those who argue that we can find ways to live with it.

## 5. Online news

**Although more and more people read news on the Internet, newspaper will remain the most important source of news.**

**Do you agree or disagree?**

The Internet is beginning to rival newspapers as the best place to find information about what is happening in the world. I believe that this trend will continue, and the Internet will soon be just as important as the traditional ones.

On the one hand, I believe that newspapers will continue to be a vital source of information, even in the Internet age. Firstly, newspapers are the most traditional means of communicating the news, and not everyone wants to or is able to use the Internet instead. For example, old people or those in rural areas might not have the ability or opportunity to get online, while many of us simply prefer newspapers even if we do have Internet access. Secondly, newspapers can be trusted as reliable sources of news because they employ professional journalists and editors. Finally, many people like the experience of holding and reading a paper rather than looking at a computer screen.

However, the Internet is likely to become just as popular as newspapers for a variety of reasons. The main reason is that it allows us much faster access to news in real time and wherever we are, on different gadgets and mobile devices. Another key benefit of online news compared to newspapers is the ability to share articles, discuss them with other people, give our views, and even contribute with our own updates on social media. For example, there has been an explosion in the use of platforms like Twitter and YouTube where anyone can share their news and views. A final point is that this source of news is less damaging to the environment.

In conclusion, I disagree with the view that newspapers will continue to be the main source of news, because I believe that the Internet will soon be equally important.

## 6. Crimes

**Some people who have been in prison become good citizens later, and it is often argued that these are the best people to talk to teenagers about the dangers of committing a crime.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

It is true that ex-prisoners can become normal, productive members of society. I completely agree with the idea that allowing such people to speak to teenagers about their experiences is the best way to discourage them from breaking the law.

In my opinion, teenagers are more likely to accept advice from someone who can speak from experience. Reformed offenders can tell young people about how they became involved in crime, the dangers of a criminal lifestyle, and what life in prison is really like. They can also dispel any ideas that teenagers may have about criminals leading glamorous lives. While adolescents are often indifferent to the guidance given by older people, I imagine that most of them would be extremely keen to hear the stories of an ex-offender. The vivid and perhaps shocking nature of these stories is likely to have a powerful impact.

The alternatives to using reformed criminals to educate teenagers about crime would be much less effective. One option would be for police officers to visit schools and talk to young people. This could be useful in terms of informing teens about what happens to lawbreakers when they are caught, but young people are often reluctant to take advice from figures of authority. A second option would be for school teachers to speak to their students about crime, but I doubt that students would see teachers as credible sources of information about this topic. Finally, educational films might be informative, but there would be no opportunity for young people to interact and ask questions.

In conclusion, I fully support the view that people who have turned their lives around after serving a prison sentence could help to deter teenagers from committing crimes.

## 7. Old and New

**The older generations tend to have very traditional ideas about how people should live, think and behave. However, some people believe that these ideas are not helpful in preparing younger generations for modern life.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?**

It is true that many older people believe in traditional values that often seem incompatible with the needs of younger people. While I agree that some traditional ideas are outdated,

I believe that others are still useful and should not be forgotten.

On the one hand, many of the ideas that elderly people have about life are becoming less relevant for younger people. In the past, for example, people were advised to learn a profession and find a secure job for life, but today's workers expect much more variety and diversity from their careers. At the same time, the 'rules' around relationships are being eroded as young adults make their own choices about who and when to marry. But perhaps the greatest disparity between the generations can be seen in their attitudes towards gender roles. The traditional roles of men and women, as breadwinners and housewives, are no longer accepted as necessary or appropriate by most younger people.

On the other hand, some traditional views and values are certainly applicable to the modern world. For example, older generations attach great importance to working hard, doing one's best, and taking pride in one's work, and these behaviours can surely benefit young people as they enter today's competitive job market. Other characteristics that are perhaps seen as traditional are politeness and good manners. In our globalised world, young adults can expect to come into contact with people from a huge variety of backgrounds, and it is more important than ever to treat others with respect. Finally, I believe that young people would lead happier lives if they had a more 'old-fashioned' sense of community and neighbourliness.

In conclusion, although the views of older people may sometimes seem unhelpful in today's world, we should not dismiss all traditional ideas as irrelevant.

## 8. Wild animals

**Wild animals have no place in the 21st century, so protecting them is a waste of resources.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Some people argue that it is pointless to spend money on the protection of wild animals because we humans have no need for them. I completely disagree with this point of view.

In my opinion, it is absurd to argue that wild animals have no place in the 21st century. I do not believe that planet Earth exists only for the benefit of humans, and there is nothing special about this particular century that means that we suddenly have the right to allow or encourage the extinction of any species. Furthermore, there is no compelling reason why we should let animals die out. We do not need to exploit or destroy every last square metre of land in order to feed or accommodate the world's population. There is plenty of room for us to exist side by side with wild animals, and this should be our aim.

I also disagree with the idea that protecting animals is a waste of resources. It is usually the protection of natural habitats that ensures the survival of wild animals, and most scientists agree that these habitats are also crucial for human survival. For example, rainforests produce oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide and stabilise the Earth's climate. If we destroyed these areas, the costs of managing the resulting changes to our planet would far outweigh the costs of conservation. By protecting wild animals and their habitats, we maintain the natural balance of all life on Earth.

In conclusion, we have no right to decide whether or not wild animals should exist, and I believe that we should do everything we can to protect them.



## 9. Child Education

**Families who send their children to private schools should not be required to pay taxes that support the state education system.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?**

Some people believe that parents of children who attend private schools should not need to contribute to state schools through taxes. Personally, I completely disagree with this view.

For a variety of reasons, it would be wrong to reduce taxes for families who pay for private education. Firstly, it would be difficult to calculate the correct amount of tax reduction for these families, and staff would be required to manage this complex process. Secondly, we all pay a certain amount of tax for public services that we may not use. For example, most people are fortunate enough not to have to call the police or fire brigade at any time in their lives, but they would not expect a tax reduction for this. Finally, if wealthy families were given a tax discount for sending their children to private schools, we might have a situation where poorer people pay higher taxes than the rich.

In my opinion, we should all be happy to pay our share of the money that supports public schools. It is beneficial for all members of society to have a high quality education system with equal opportunities for all young people. This will result in a well-educated workforce, and in turn a more productive and prosperous nation. Parents of children in private schools may also see the advantages of this in their own lives. For example, a company owner will need well qualified and competent staff, and a well-funded education system can provide such employees.

In conclusion, I do not believe that any financial concessions should be made for people who choose private education.

## 10. Celebrities

**Nowadays celebrities are more famous for their glamour and wealth than for their achievements, and this sets a bad example to young people.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?**

It is true that some celebrities are known for their glamorous lifestyles rather than for the work they do. While I agree that these celebrities set a bad example for children, I believe that other famous people act as positive role models.

On the one hand, many people do achieve fame without really working for it. They may have inherited money from parents, married a famous or wealthy person, or they may have appeared in gossip magazines or on a reality TV programme. A good example would be Paris Hilton, who is rich and famous for the wrong reasons. She spends her time attending parties and nightclubs, and her behaviour promotes the idea that appearance, glamour and media profile are more important than hard work and good character. The message to young people is that success can be achieved easily, and that school work is not necessary.

On the other hand, there are at least as many celebrities whose accomplishments make them excellent role models for young people. Actors, musicians and sports stars become famous idols because they have worked hard and applied themselves to develop real skills and abilities. They demonstrate great effort, determination and ambition, which is required for someone who wants to be truly successful in their chosen field. An example is the actor and martial artist Jackie Chan, who has become world famous through years of practice and hard work. This kind of self-made celebrity can inspire children to develop their talents through application and perseverance.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the influence of celebrities on young people can be positive as well as negative.

## 11. Job and Money

**When choosing a job, the salary is the most important consideration.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Many people choose their jobs based on the size of the salary offered. Personally, I disagree with the idea that money is the key consideration when deciding on a career, because I believe that other factors are equally important.

On the one hand, I agree that money is necessary in order for people to meet their basic needs. For example, we all need money to pay for housing, food, bills, health care, and education. Most people consider it a priority to at least earn a salary that allows them to cover these needs and have a reasonable quality of life. If people chose their jobs based on enjoyment or other non-financial factors, they might find it difficult to support themselves. Artists and musicians, for instance, are known for choosing a career path that they love, but that does not always provide them with enough money to live comfortably and raise a family.

Nevertheless, I believe that other considerations are just as important as what we earn in our jobs. Firstly, personal relationships and the atmosphere in a workplace are extremely important when choosing a job. Having a good manager or friendly colleagues, for example, can make a huge difference to workers' levels of happiness and general quality of life. Secondly, many people's feelings of job satisfaction come from their professional achievements, the skills they learn, and the position they reach, rather than the money they earn. Finally, some people choose a career because they want to help others and contribute something positive to society.

In conclusion, while salaries certainly affect people's choice of profession, I do not believe that money outweighs all other motivators.

## 12. Hobbies

**Some people believe that hobbies need to be difficult to be enjoyable.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Some hobbies are relatively easy, while others present more of a challenge. Personally, I believe that both types of hobby can be fun, and I therefore disagree with the statement that hobbies need to be difficult in order to be enjoyable.

On the one hand, many people enjoy easy hobbies. One example of an activity that is easy for most people is swimming. This hobby requires very little equipment, it is simple to learn, and it is inexpensive. I remember learning to swim at my local swimming pool when I was a child, and it never felt like a demanding or challenging experience. Another hobby that I find easy and fun is photography. In my opinion, anyone can take interesting pictures without knowing too much about the technicalities of operating a camera. Despite being straightforward, taking photos is a satisfying activity.

On the other hand, difficult hobbies can sometimes be more exciting. If an activity is more challenging, we might feel a greater sense of satisfaction when we manage to do it successfully. For example, film editing is a hobby that requires a high level of knowledge and expertise. In my case, it took me around two years before I became competent at this activity, but now I enjoy it much more than I did when I started. I believe that many hobbies give us more pleasure when we reach a higher level of performance because the results are better and the feeling of achievement is greater.

In conclusion, simple hobbies can be fun and relaxing, but difficult hobbies can be equally pleasurable for different reasons.

### 13. Hobbies – trends or not

**Popular hobbies and interests change over time and are more a reflection of trends and fashions than an indication of what individuals really want to do in their spare time. To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

Some leisure activities become fashionable for a short time and then disappear when a new trend comes along, whereas others seem to be perennially popular. I can therefore only partly agree with the assertion that hobbies reflect changing fashions rather than our true interests.

On the one hand, it is true that many hobbies are simply passing trends. Children and teenagers, in particular, are attracted to whatever activity is currently popular among their peers. My 10-year-old niece, for example, seems to have a new interest every month, as she joins in with the latest craze that sweeps through her primary school. Over the last year or so, she has been obsessed with Rubik's cubes, fidget spinners, squidgies and slime. In a similar way, there have been several different fitness trends for adults over recent years, from jogging to yoga to circuit training, and I doubt whether the majority of participants continued to enjoy those activities in the long term.

On the other hand, many people spend their free time doing popular activities that are far from trendy. One good example would be the game chess. Children and adults who enjoy playing chess are certainly not following a new fashion or wasting their time on something that they do not truly like. On the contrary, they are passionate about a game that has existed for hundreds of years, and they find it inherently fascinating and absorbing. I would say the same about many other hobbies, from reading to swimming.

In conclusion, while some people are attracted to the latest fashionable hobby, others choose their pastimes for more genuine reasons.

#### 14. Historical sites

**Foreign visitors should pay more than local visitors for cultural and historical attractions.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?**

It is sometimes argued that tourists from overseas should be charged more than local residents to visit important sites and monuments. I completely disagree with this idea.

The argument in favour of higher prices for foreign tourists would be that cultural or historical attractions often depend on state subsidies to keep them going, which means that the resident population already pays money to these sites through the tax system. However, I believe this to be a very shortsighted view. Foreign tourists contribute to the economy of the host country with the money they spend on a wide range of goods and services, including food, souvenirs, accommodation and travel. The governments and inhabitants of every country should be happy to subsidise important tourist sites and encourage people from the rest of the world to visit them.

If travellers realised that they would have to pay more to visit historical and cultural attractions in a particular nation, they would perhaps decide not to go to that country on holiday. To take the UK as an example, the tourism industry and many related jobs rely on visitors coming to the country to see places like Windsor Castle or Saint Paul's Cathedral. These two sites charge the same price regardless of nationality, and this helps to promote the nation's cultural heritage. If overseas tourists stopped coming due to higher prices, there would be a risk of insufficient funding for the maintenance of these important buildings.

In conclusion, I believe that every effort should be made to attract tourists from overseas, and it would be counterproductive to make them pay more than local residents.

## 15. Unpaid work

**Some people think that all teenagers should be required to do unpaid work in their free time to help the local community. They believe this would benefit both the individual teenager and society as a whole.**

**Do you agree or disagree?**

Many young people work on a volunteer basis, and this can only be beneficial for both the individual and society as a whole. However, I do not agree that we should therefore force all teenagers to do unpaid work.

Most young people are already under enough pressure with their studies, without being given the added responsibility of working in their spare time. School is just as demanding as a full-time job, and teachers expect their students to do homework and exam revision on top of attending lessons every day. When young people do have some free time, we should encourage them to enjoy it with their friends or to spend it doing sports and other leisure activities. They have many years of work ahead of them when they finish their studies.

At the same time, I do not believe that society has anything to gain from obliging young people to do unpaid work. In fact, I would argue that it goes against the values of a free and fair society to force a group of people to do something against their will. Doing this can only lead to resentment amongst young people, who would feel that they were being used, and parents, who would not want to be told how to raise their children. Currently, nobody is forced to volunteer, and this is surely the best system.

In conclusion, teenagers may choose to work for free and help others, but in my opinion we should not make this compulsory.

## 16. Communities

**We cannot help everyone in the world that needs help, so we should only be concerned with our own communities and countries.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?**

Some people believe that we should not help people in other countries as long as there are problems in our own society. I disagree with this view because I believe that we should try to help as many people as possible.

On the one hand, I accept that it is important to help our neighbours and fellow citizens. In most communities there are people who are impoverished or disadvantaged in some way. It is possible to find homeless people, for example, in even the wealthiest of cities, and for those who are concerned about this problem, there are usually opportunities to volunteer time or give money to support these people. In the UK, people can help in a variety of ways, from donating clothing to serving free food in a soup kitchen. As the problems are on our doorstep, and there are obvious ways to help, I can understand why some people feel that we should prioritise local charity.

At the same time, I believe that we have an obligation to help those who live beyond our national borders. In some countries the problems that people face are much more serious than those in our own communities, and it is often even easier to help. For example, when children are dying from curable diseases in African countries, governments and individuals in richer countries can save lives simply by paying for vaccines that already exist. A small donation to an international charity might have a much greater impact than helping in our local area.

In conclusion, it is true that we cannot help everyone, but in my opinion national boundaries should not stop us from helping those who are in need.



## 17. Male versus Female in Unis

**Universities should accept equal numbers of male and female students in every subject.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree?**

In my opinion, men and women should have the same educational opportunities. However, I do not agree with the idea of accepting equal proportions of each gender in every university subject.

Having the same number of men and women on all degree courses is simply unrealistic. Student numbers on any course depend on the applications that the institution receives. If a university decided to fill courses with equal numbers of males and females, it would need enough applicants of each gender. In reality, many courses are more popular with one gender than the other, and it would not be practical to aim for equal proportions. For example, nursing courses tend to attract more female applicants, and it would be difficult to fill these courses if fifty per cent of the places needed to go to males.

Apart from the practical concerns expressed above, I also believe that it would be unfair to base admission to university courses on gender. Universities should continue to select the best candidates for each course according to their qualifications. In this way, both men and women have the same opportunities, and applicants know that they will be successful if they work hard to achieve good grades at school. If a female student is the best candidate for a place on a course, it is surely wrong to reject her in favour of a male student with lower grades or fewer qualifications.

In conclusion, the selection of university students should be based on merit, and it would be both impractical and unfair to change to a selection procedure based on gender.

## 18. Cultures and Advances

**It is inevitable that traditional cultures will be lost as technology develops. Technology and traditional cultures are incompatible.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view?**

Some people believe that technological developments lead to the loss of traditional cultures. I partly agree with this assertion; while it may be true in the case of some societies, others seem to be unaffected by technology and the modern world.

On the one hand, the advances in technology that have driven industrialisation in developed countries have certainly contributed to the disappearance of traditional ways of life. For example, in pre-industrial Britain, generations of families grew up in the same small village communities. These communities had a strong sense of identity, due to their shared customs and beliefs. However, developments in transport, communications and manufacturing led to the dispersal of families and village communities as people moved to the cities in search of work. Nowadays most British villages are inhabited by commuters, many of whom do not know their closest neighbours.

On the other hand, in some parts of the world traditional cultures still thrive. There are tribes in the Amazon Rainforest, for example, that have been completely untouched by the technological developments of the developed world. These tribal communities continue to hunt and gather food from the forest, and traditional skills are passed on to children by parents and elders. Other traditional cultures, such as farming communities in parts of Africa, are embracing communications technologies. Mobile phones give farmers access to information, from weather predictions to market prices, which helps them to prosper and therefore supports their culture.

In conclusion, many traditional ways of life have been lost as a result of advances in technology, but other traditional communities have survived and even flourished.