

## **Major 7 Topics for GP Essay**

I always believe that the most effective way to study GP is through looking at questions because they give you a specific issue/direction to think about and also check whether you are truly familiar with the topic you wish to focus on in exams.

Often students struggle with essays because they see an unfamiliar question and they panic and don't know what to write. The easy way to solve this is to be exposed to the possible questions for the major topics so that you will be well-prepared. You need to become used to this process of looking at a foreign question and connecting it with content knowledge you possess — this is the key to scoring in GP essays.

So below are over 200 questions that i have compiled over the past 3 years, all for your easy reference

I have also included some general questions for those of you who prefer to attempt general questions. After the compilation list, you will find 20 questions across 4 topics that i have singled out to be important and i have written my analysis and tips for those questions, be sure to check them out below!

### **1. Arts**

1. To what extent can the Arts effect positive social change today?
2. 'We should abolish state funding for the Arts.' How far do you agree that this should be the case?
3. 'Censorship undermines the arts.' Comment.
4. 'For the majority of people, the Arts are a waste of time.' How true is this of your society?
5. 'We are merely paying lip service to the arts.' How true is this in your society?
6. 'Cultural and heritage sites have lost their relevance.' How far is this true of your society?
7. 'Art is not meant to instruct or influence; it is only meant to be enjoyed.' Do you agree with this viewpoint?
8. 'Modern Art is not considered Art.' Discuss.
9. 'Books are dead. Films are the way to go.' Do you agree?
10. Should there be any restrictions to enjoying the Arts in your society?
11. 'No one really cares what the artist has to say.' What are your views?
12. 'The progress of a society is best reflected through the arts.' What do you think?
13. Evaluate the appeal of theatre, dance or music in your society.
14. 'The Arts are a luxury and not a necessity.' Discuss this view with reference to your society.
15. In times of economic difficulty, should the Arts in your society still be publicly funded?
16. 'There is no such thing as bad art.' Discuss.
17. Do you agree that there is little value in literature today?
18. Assess the view that reading books is, by far, the most wondrous of all pastimes.
19. 'The only obstacle in the Arts is censorship.' Discuss.
20. Assess the view that Literature is a subject that has no practical value.
21. Assess the view that pop music today is frivolous.
22. Can fantasy books and films offer anything more than an escape from reality?
25. Evaluate the claim that the artist's only responsibility is to his art.
26. 'Anything can be considered art, but not all art is of equal value.' What is your view?
27. How far do you agree that the value of the Arts has diminished in modern society?
28. 'As a society progresses, there is little value in preserving its heritage.' How true is this of your society?
29. How far, in your society, are efforts to preserve cultural heritage merely superficial?
30. 'Fantasy novels offer little apart from enjoyment.' Discuss.
31. Consider the view that images are more powerful than words.
32. 'Art that does not reflect society holds little value.' Discuss.'

33. 'The arts are a distraction from the problems we face today.' To what extent is this a fair viewpoint?
34. Are museums a waste of money?

## 2. Science

1. **Assess the view that scientific research should not be constrained by ethical concerns.**
2. **Consider the view that new technologies create more problems than benefits for society.**
3. **Should the advancement of artificial intelligence be a cause for concern?**
4. **Does modern technology satisfy our wants rather than our needs?**
5. **To what extent has technology made our lives more fulfilling?**
6. 'Scientific knowledge cannot be trusted because it is unreliable.' Is this a fair statement?
7. 'The main aim of scientific research is to create knowledge about how the world works, rather than solve problems.' To what extent is this true?
8. 'People in the workplace should embrace rather than fear technological advancements.' Discuss.
9. To what extent is animal testing acceptable in scientific research?
10. 'Modern technology has removed the need for reading skills.' Do you agree?
11. How worried should we be that recent advances in science and technology are creating new challenges and worsening old problems?
12. 'Traditional values should never be sacrificed in the name of progress.' To what extent do you agree?
13. To what extent have technological developments enhanced learning in today's world?
14. 'Technology is developing too fast for our own good.' To what extent do you agree?
15. 'All forms of scientific research are worth pursuing.' Discuss.
16. Should humans be hired when robots can do the job better?
17. How effective is technology in making us healthier?
18. Are machines making humans obsolete?
19. Medical science should seek to heal rather than enhance.' Comment.
20. How far do you agree that technology gives us greater control in life?
21. 'Recent innovations in transport are transforming our way of life.' How far is this true of your society today?
22. Consider the view that advancements in artificial intelligence will result in more divides.
23. 'Artificial intelligence enhances our lives.' To what extent do you agree with this view?
24. 'Artificial intelligence should be embraced, since it is inevitable.' Discuss.
25. Should technological advancement be encouraged when it outpaces ethics?
26. 'If a job can be replaced by machines, it probably should.' To what extent do you agree?
27. Should the government support only scientific research that can benefit the majority of the people?
28. 'Artificial intelligence is more dangerous than useful.' Do you agree?
29. 'Scientists are too preoccupied with whether they could, instead of thinking whether they should.' Is this a fair comment?
30. Results are more important than processes in scientific research. To what extent do you agree?
31. How far have people benefitted from changes to the workplace?
32. 'Scientific development is always at the expense of morality.' Do you agree?
33. Evaluate the claim that the regulation of technology is a desirable, but unrealistic, goal.
34. Has technology made modern society a more dangerous place?

## 3. Media

1. **'We can no longer trust the media.' Is this a fair comment?**
2. **How effective is social media as a tool in bringing about change in society?**
3. **Tackling fake news is mainly the responsibility of the government.' Do you agree?**
4. **Is it fair to say that only people who have something to hide should be worried about losing their privacy?**
5. **Do you agree that freedom of speech should never be denied even though it can be abused?**
6. 'Entertainment, not truth, is the priority of the media today.' Comment.
7. 'Advertisements are nothing but lies.' Discuss.

8. To what extent is the media responsible for the perception of truth in the world today?
9. Consider the claim that the purpose of the media is not simply to convey the truth, but to make it interesting.
10. 'The news today deals with what is popular, rather than what is important.' How far do you agree with this statement?
11. To what extent should news media present views which are considered offensive?
12. 'Freedom of speech must include the freedom to offend.' Do you agree?
13. To what extent can we believe what is in the news when information today can be easily made up?
14. 'There is too much emphasis on image today.' Do you agree?
15. 'The world today values appearance over substance.' Is this a fair comment?
16. Consider the view that what is posted online is all talk and no action.
17. 'Far too much attention is given to image in today's world.' Do you agree?
18. 'Propaganda is all around us; no one knows the truth anymore.' Discuss.
19. 'The media promote a sense of fear in people which is unnecessary and undesired.' Discuss.
20. Do personal opinions discussed on the internet really influence society?
21. 'In the age of information, ignorance is a choice.' Comment.
22. How far is it true that people today will believe anything the media presents?
23. Is it fair to expect advertisements to be truthful?
24. Discuss the view that dissenting voices should be censored in your society.
25. 'People will believe anything they read, hear, or see in the media.' Is this statement reflective of the situation in your country?
26. Has social media given people too much power?
27. 'Trivial news is worthless.' Is this a fair comment?
28. 'The media today has made society less open.' What is your view?
29. To what extent is the use of social media by politicians a positive development?
30. Is greater regulation the answer to fake news?
31. 'Freedom of expression is a luxury we cannot afford.' How far is this true in your society?
32. How far do you agree that social media empower people to make a change?
33. With the proliferation of the Internet, is privacy more desirable today?
34. Does censorship still have a place in this digital age?

## 4. Politics

1. **'In today's world, governments should prioritise domestic affairs over international ones.' Discuss.**
2. **Should small countries be allowed to take the lead in global affairs?**
3. **How far does the state have the right to restrict the freedom of the individual?**
4. **Can migration be justified when it creates social problems?**
5. **'There are no permanent friends, only permanent interests.' Assess the validity of this statement in international relations.**
6. To what extent does the presence of a foreign power have a negative effect?
7. 'Dictatorships are more efficient than democracies.' Discuss.
8. 'The hallmark of a great country is not how prosperous it is, but how inclusive its people can be.' Should your country work towards this ideal?
9. 'In a borderless world, it does not matter where you come from.' To what extent do you agree?
10. 'The key to effective leadership is to give the majority what they want.' Do you agree?
11. Is politics today nothing but a series of empty promises?
12. Can a country afford to isolate itself from the rest?
13. 'Diplomacy, not war, is the solution to conflicts in the world today.' Do you agree?
14. To what extent are migrants a threat to a country in today's world?
15. Considering their apparent financial stability, should developed countries be obliged to help other countries in need?
16. In a world dominated by superpowers, can small countries play a significant role on the global stage?
17. Is democracy the most effective form of government today?
18. Assess the view that globalisation has only resulted in more inequality in the world.

19. Does geography still determine a country's prospects in today's world?
20. Evaluate the claim that governments should not be allowed to restrict the rights of their citizens.
21. To what extent can small countries wield substantial influence in the world?
22. Examine the view that a good leader should be effective rather than popular.
23. 'Geography is destiny.' Discuss.
24. Assess the view that good leaders are defined by how well they champion human rights.
25. Do international organisations have real influence over global affairs today?
26. Should privacy be sacrificed for the sake of national security?
27. Is geography still destiny?
28. 'Citizens are too reliant on the government.' How far is this statement true in your society?
29. Should the concerns of minority groups influence policies in a country?
30. 'The key responsibility of a government is to create wealth for the country.' What is your view?
31. 'International relationships between countries are becoming increasingly important.' Discuss.
32. 'Strong threats always work better than gentle persuasion.' What are your views?
33. Should the public care about a politician's private life?
34. Should citizen welfare, rather than global issues, be the main concern of governments?

## 5. Environment

1. **'The solution to all environmental problems is more regulation, not education.' Do you agree?**
2. **To what extent is environmental protection the responsibility of the individual?**
3. **'Environmental sustainability is a desirable but futile pursuit.' Discuss.**
4. **Assess the view that sustainable growth is more important than rapid economic development.**
5. **'The overconsumption of energy is the greatest threat to the environment today.' Discuss.**
6. "We are not the masters of this earth." To what extent is this true of the environment today?
7. How far is it possible to live an environmentally sustainable lifestyle in today's world?
8. 'Going green makes good business sense.' Comment.
9. To what extent is renewable energy the solution for the world's increasing need for energy?
10. 'The environment is the main cause of our health woes today.' Discuss.
11. 'We are consuming too much for our own good.' Is this true of society today?
12. 'The global demand for food can only be met at the expense of the environment.' To what extent do you agree?
13. 'Environmentalism needs heroes in order for it to be successful.' Do you agree?
14. Why are countries so reluctant to cooperate in tackling global environmental problems and what can be done to solve this problem?
15. Should poorer countries address environmental issues when the basic needs of their own people are not being met?
16. To what extent should people pay attention to the protection of the environment in countries other than their own?
17. 'The real heroes of environmentalism are rebels.' Discuss.
18. 'Environmental pollution is a catastrophe waiting to happen.' Comment.
19. 'Man is helpless in the face of climate change.' Do you agree?
20. Given the global impact of climate change, should every country play an equal part in saving the environment?
21. 'Corporations, rather than individuals, should be blamed for harms done to the environment.' Discuss.
22. Discuss the view that environmental conservation efforts today are nothing more than token gestures.
23. How far is sustainable living a realistic goal in your society?
24. To what extent is man's concern for the environment driven by self-preservation?

## 6. General

1. Considering the increasing threat of terrorism, are governments justified in limiting people's rights?
2. 'Tourism brings less developed countries more harm than good.' Comment.
3. 'Nothing but provocation and self-centeredness.' Is this a fair description of the state of affairs in today's world?

4. Should historical monuments and objects be preserved when such an undertaking is very expensive or even a source of unhappiness?
5. Consider the view that travel is of little value to the tourist.
6. Is diversity necessarily a good thing?
7. 'The more society advances, the more people want to remember the past.' How far do you agree?
8. How effective is imprisonment in combatting crime?
9. The study of History is underrated.' Do you agree?
10. 'Travel, rather than reading, is the best way to learn.' How far do you agree?
11. 'History cannot be relied upon to tell the truth.' Do you agree?
12. 'There is no cause for optimism today.' What is your view?
13. How far can a culturally diverse society build unity?
14. 'In an increasingly uncertain world, there is little point in predicting the future.' Discuss.
15. 'History is just a set of lies.' Discuss.
16. To what extent are wars and conflicts due to poor leadership?
17. Can government surveillance eradicate the threat of terrorism?
18. 'It is a mistake to give criminals a second chance.' Is this view valid?
19. Evaluate the claim that a knowledge of history is more an advantage rather than a problem for political leaders today.
20. 'Everyone has a part to play in tackling global issues.' How far do you agree?
21. How effective are prisons in addressing the problem of crime?
22. Is change always good?
23. Is competition always desirable?
24. 'No cause is ever worth dying for'. Discuss.
25. Should the State have unlimited power to deal with the increasing threat of terrorism?
26. Should the government aim to achieve consensus when making national policies?

## 7. Individuals/Values

1. How far is failure an essential part of success?
2. 'Experiences are more valuable than material possessions.' Do you agree?
3. Is humility still desirable today?
4. 'My life, my choice.' How far can people expect to live life this way?
5. Should perseverance always be encouraged?
6. 'Happiness is an expensive pursuit today.' How far do you agree?
7. 'Diligence is the key to success.' What is your view?
8. Is loyalty still a valuable trait in this ever-changing world?
9. Is charity always a good thing?
10. Should we always be compassionate?
11. Consider the importance of non-conformity.
12. Are rules meant to be broken?
13. Is volunteerism always good?
14. 'Failure should never be acceptable.' Discuss.
15. Is greed always an undesirable trait?
16. 'Freedom remains an unattainable goal.' What is your view?
17. 'Less is more.' Is this sound advice?
18. Examine the claim that work and happiness do not mix.
19. To what extent is loyalty valued in today's world?
20. Adversity brings out the worst in human nature.' Discuss.
21. Is pressure a motivating force or a cause for unhappiness?
22. To what extent are people judged more by their physical appearances than by their abilities?

23. 'Getting what one wants in life is what matters.' Discuss.
24. 'Graciousness is of little value today.' How far is this true?
25. 'A preoccupation with the self is the curse of modern life.' To what extent do you agree?
26. How valuable is selflessness in today's world?
27. 'Promises should never be broken.' What is your view?
28. 'Living a life based on principles is all that matters.' Should this view be taken seriously?
29. It does not pay to be kind.' Discuss.
30. 'Happiness is merely an illusion in the modern world.' Do you agree?

## **20 Key Questions from 4 Topics:**

### **Science**

1. **Assess the view that scientific research should not be constrained by ethical concerns.**
  - The tension between advancing scientific research and the ethical considerations that come with it is always an issue. You have to think of the different areas in which science has affected ethics, some cases accidentally and others are more intentional. Ensure that you clearly outline what the ethical concerns are.
2. **Consider the view that new technologies create more problems than benefits for society.**
  - New technologies suggest that we have to look at some recent or more futuristic examples, including artificial intelligence, cloud technology, internet of things, virtual reality, blockchain, big data etc. Be sure to google some of these terms and gain a quick understanding if you aren't familiar with them! You have to remember that the examples need to be about these technologies and not some dated invention. From there, you can analyse the pros and cons of it to decide which stand to pick.
3. **Should the advancement of artificial intelligence be a cause for concern?**
  - AI itself is an incredibly important topic, it has not come out for the A levels but it probably will because it is really the next big thing. With every technology, there are always pros and cons to it. Despite all the hype and excitement for AI, there are concerns about its safety, privacy issues, displacement of jobs etc. An easy way to think about this is what new capabilities AI has granted and what new problems it has also created in the process.
4. **Does modern technology satisfy our wants rather than our needs?**
  - This is a typical question under Science & Tech that looks at the purpose of why we pursue technology. Are we focusing on necessities or are we developing technologies based on our desires and whims? Note that there are often many different kinds of motivations and intentions behind the creation of a technology. The essay has to basically discuss why some of the modern technology has been created, from there you can decide whether it is more of needs or wants.
5. **To what extent has technology made our lives more fulfilling?**
  - I always see this as a fundamental question that we should know if we wish to focus on this topic. It is asking about the impact of technology and when it comes to something so important and omnipresent like technology, we have to definitely assess its impacts. Come up with a definition of fulfilling and then attribute the pros of technology to 'fulfilling' and the cons of it to 'not fulfilling'. For example, technology helping us to solve modern problems could be linked to fulfilling, while technology causing more divisions could be linked to not fulfilling. Essentially, you have to realise that this is very much a variation of the typical question about tech's impact. "Made our lives more fulfilling" can easily change to "empowered us" or "given us more control" or "complicated our lives" etc. All these are just different claims of tech's impacts.

### **Media**

1. **'We can no longer trust the media.' Is this a fair comment?**
  - These days, the reliability of the media is greatly brought into question due to the prevalence of fake news. Fake news is one of the most recent concerns surrounding the use of media, especially the internet because of how easy and fast it is to spread content on there. Of course, the other

side of the story is also about how there are many checks against fake news implemented by both news agencies themselves and governments, and the existence of multiple sources allows for cross-referencing by consumer of media like you and I.

2. **How effective is social media as a tool in bringing about change in society?**

- This is also a really important question you should know under the topic of media. It looks at the function of social media, with regard to whether it can bring about change. Social media is one of the defining technologies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it has created some revolutionary impacts, many of which contributing to creating change. Think about large political changes that have its roots in social media like Arab Spring or social campaigns that go viral and gain lots of attention online be it Greta Thunberg advocating for environmental conservation or MeToo movement raising awareness and changing attitudes towards sexual harassment. Also realise that there are issues that could preclude their effectiveness, slacktivism being one of them.

3. **Tackling fake news is mainly the responsibility of the government.' Do you agree?**

- Another issue surrounding fake news is trying to prevent or solve it. It then becomes a discussion of who is more responsible for doing so, and you have to think about the different stakeholders involved: governments, news agencies, influencers, individuals contributing content and individuals receiving content. Think about what each of these parties can do to address fake news and why any of them could be more effective or responsible than others.

4. **Is it fair to say that only people who have something to hide should be worried about losing their privacy?**

- Privacy, alongside with fake news, are the most recent issues concerning media. Social media has completely changed the way we leave digital footprints online. And then we have companies that collect lots of big data from our online usage, like Facebook and Google who have essentially large troves of data. You need to consider what are the implications of all these potential loss of privacy and whether it affects just people with things to hide or it affects any common man who uses the internet. Of course, apart from the internet you can also bring in ideas about government surveillance in some countries that are intensified by tech advancements.

5. **Do you agree that freedom of speech should never be denied even though it can be abused?**

- Censorship is a must know when it comes to media. There are many arguments out there about the pros and cons surrounding censorship, so make sure you understand them. This question specifically gives you the context that freedom of speech will be abused, meaning that we can get inflammatory and offensive hate speech spreading online. So knowing that, do you think freedom of speech should be upheld? It is about looking at the consequences of unrestricted speech and thinking about whether it is worth it to accept them in the name of protecting freedom of speech.

## Politics

1. **'In today's world, governments should prioritise domestic affairs over international ones.' Discuss.**

- This is a very important question for politics. There is always this tension between focusing on domestic affairs and interfering in other affairs concerning other countries. However, we need to remember that the lines are often not so blurred. International issues often have spillover effects on countries. For example, the problems with conflicts and wars and how they lead to refugee and migration issues, or global issues like environmental and energy conservation transcends the boundaries of countries to affect everyone. Terrorism is also another good example of how it can easily take root in any country with extremist ideas, rather than being something confined to a geographical area. Of course, also remember that the question is talking about prioritising (focusing on one over the other), so you have to think about whether that is logical from a government's perspective.

2. **Should small countries be allowed to take the lead in global affairs?**

- The distinction between small and big countries is always a concern in politics because it greatly affects the dynamics they have interacting with other countries. So this question gets you to think about the differences between small and big countries in terms of the impact they make on an international level. Think about the resources they have, whether they can gain support from other countries, whether they have legitimacy to give leadership about certain causes and whether they have the means and channels to make an impact.

3. **How far does the state have the right to restrict the freedom of the individual?**

- First up think about why the state might even have a right to restrict freedom or certain rights. It stems from this idea of a social contract where the people agree to certain powers granted to the government when they elected the government. The question is what the extent of these powers are, what is considered justified? Also recognise that there are key reasons that motivate governments to restrict rights, in the name of national security or maintaining social cohesion. Of course, there are some more self-serving intentions that power-hungry governments might have,

including to retain power and control the masses. You also have to consider in what ways freedom is being restricted (privacy, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly etc).

4. **Can migration be justified when it creates social problems?**

- In this age of globalisation and open borders, migration is a huge topic of discussion. It is pretty much the inevitable product of many protracted conflicts across the world that result in massive displacements. The other type of migration is the more voluntary kind where people just want to stay in another country, but it could also pose problems of culture dilution or lack of assimilation or job displacements etc. An easy way to think about this is to look at the pros and cons of migration. Remember that the condition given is that it creates social problems, so you would not discuss migration that is plainly and solely beneficial to the country (without causing any social problems).

5. **‘There are no permanent friends, only permanent interests.’ Assess the validity of this statement in international relations.**

- This question looks at how we should approach international relations — whether it is from a place of trust and cooperation or caution and pragmatism (realpolitik). To answer this question, you need to consider the different examples of countries being in alliance or collaborating with other countries, and also examples of countries sacrificing these relations for the sake of their own interests. A recent example could be the controversial decision of the US to leave the Kurds in Syria (traditionally their allies in multiple conflicts in the region).

## Environment

1. **‘The solution to all environmental problems is more regulation, not education.’ Do you agree?**

- The environmental issue is difficult to solve because there are many potential solutions and they each have their pros and cons. This particular question gets you to compare between 2 specific solutions of regulation and education. The former is a lot more forced and top-down whereas the latter encourages understanding and bottom-up initiatives that stem from people’s changed attitudes. Think about the pros and cons of each before you come up with your stand. You should be considering factors like effectiveness, speed of the solution, whether it is targeted at the existing problems, whether it is the best option in the long-run etc.

2. **To what extent is environmental protection the responsibility of the individual?**

- There are many stakeholders involved in environmental conservation. To attempt this question, you need to have a clear idea who these stakeholders are: individuals, governments, corporations, international organisations, non-governmental organisations etc. Why should the individual be more or less responsible compared to these other parties? Some advocates like to cite the powerlessness of individuals in making a change given majority of carbon emissions come from large companies but others believe that individuals, through their consumption habits, impact how companies are run and so they have bargaining power over the companies.

3. **‘Environmental sustainability is a desirable but futile pursuit.’ Discuss.**

- A lot of the discussion about the environment also goes back to its feasibility. The general sentiment is that the environment needs fixing and we have to embrace sustainability but sceptics point out resistance coming from whether some of the initiatives can be successfully implemented. And even if they are implemented, will they have a significant impact on the environment? In other words, is there anything we can do for environmental conservation or is it simply an inevitable disaster that awaits mankind? Think about the different ways in which we are trying to pursue sustainability — reducing consumption, recycling efforts, pressuring companies to go green, developing alternative energy sources etc.

4. **Assess the view that sustainable growth is more important than rapid economic development.**

- The tension between economic development and environmental conservation is extremely true because the government has limited budget to spend. Sustainability often comes at a hefty price and means sacrificing economic goals in the process. However, you may also argue how these two are tied together because sustainability can in turn generate economic benefits for the country, especially in the long run.

5. **‘The overconsumption of energy is the greatest threat to the environment today.’ Discuss.**

- Energy is quite a niche topic under environment but it also a popular A levels question that has come out several times. Threat can come from two aspects: 1) whether this factor is a root cause of environmental woes and 2) whether this factor can be successfully mitigated. In this question, you would also have to consider some other factors that are threats to the environment.