



Suggested Answers to 2267 Social Studies 'O' LEVEL 2017

SECTION A (SBQ)

(a)

The cartoonist is unhappy with the methods of tackling the haze problem facing Singapore. This can be seen by the two schoolchildren who said that “Haze masks aren’t for breathing, they’re for gagging”, which implies that the haze masks were worn not as an effective solution, but as a widely accepted, temporary method of putting up with the haze.

The cartoonist has a cynical / disapproving attitude of the origins of the haze problem in Singapore. He feels that the problem is attributed to the irresponsible palm oil companies who are shirking the responsibility. This can be seen from how the people in the cartoon are commenting on the palm oil executives saying that “their haze masks are for gagging”. This means that he feels that the palm oil companies should be responsible for the management of the haze problem and yet they are trying to cover up the truth.

The cartoonist also believes that the haze issue is aggravated by the greed and incompetency of the oil companies. In the source, three men representing the Palm Oil Company Executives are looking out from a window of a building to where the two schoolchildren are walking by. The men are also wearing haze masks, but are standing behind the window, to show that they may be disconnected from the consequences of their actions, and hence may be driven by their own separate agenda to gain as much profits from the palm oil industry as possible.

As this cartoon originates from Singapore, it represents a local perspective and tells us of Singaporeans’ displeasure towards the origins and the management of the haze problem. The source wants to convince the public that the culprits of the haze problem – the palm oil companies – are not taking responsibility and are trying to cover up the truth behind their actions. The source hopes that the public can better understand the complexities of the haze problem and bring these culprits to justice.

(b)

The PM wanted to alert Singaporeans of the actions taken to shut down schools the day after the social media post was made, and assure the citizens of Singapore to stay vigilant as well as to offer support to one another during the haze crisis.

The PM gave updates on the current and expected PSI range to allow Singaporeans to make informed decisions for the day and the following days after. For example, the PM suggested to “drink plenty of water and avoid going outdoors” when the PSI entered the ‘very unhealthy’ range. Primary and secondary schools are going to be closed the following day to reduce occurrence of health risks from children. Singaporeans will resume working hours as per normal, with precautionary measures to be taken by employers so that the health of the workers will not be compromised.



The PM also wanted to inform Singaporeans of assistance from the government, to encourage solidarity in times of crisis by leading with exemplary action, by distributing “masks to vulnerable and needy Singaporeans at community clubs” and that “volunteers will visit residents who are unable to go to the CCs on their own”.

The Prime Minister makes this social media post to inform Singaporeans that the government is taking the necessary measures to deal with the increasingly serious haze problem. Source B says “we are closing all primary and secondary schools” and “we are also giving out masks to vulnerable and needy Singaporeans”. This shows that the government is taking the effort to help Singaporeans deal with the health impacts of the haze.

The Prime Minister makes this social media post to urge people and businesses to take good care of themselves and their employees. Source B says “employers should not compromise on the health and safety of their employees” and “please drink plenty of water and avoid going outdoors”. This shows that the Prime Minister is advising his people to stay strong and take care of themselves in the midst of this haze problem.

The Prime Minister also makes this social media post to reassure Singaporeans that the government has the people’s best interests at heart and that they will do all they can to take care of the people. This is to highlight the government’s efficiency and ensure that the people have faith and remain supportive of the government.

(c)

Sources C and D disagree on the effectiveness of the measures to tackle the haze problem. Source C believes that an effective measure is through palm oil organization policies that bans or restricts burning, whereas Source D believes that the haze problem can be curbed by tightening the guidelines for financial support to palm oil organizations.

Source C is from a sustainability document of an oil palm company called Wilmar International, released in September 2015. Being one of the members of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil, their proposal centers around an action-consequence method to prevent burning of plantations. This method involves “immediate termination of business dealings” with any operations that breaches their No Burn policy, and thus directly affects the primary players of the industry, namely the plantation owners themselves. However, in Source C, Wilbur International mentioned a drawback to the No Burn policy as “fires that start in areas controlled by small farmers and local communities who still burn land”.

Source D is from an article published in an online newspaper on October 2015. The article advocated the use of incentive approaches to encourage palm oil companies to be more responsible in their actions in the industry. One of the incentives stems from “peer pressure to keep lenders in line as no bank would want a reputational risk”, following the guidelines on responsible financing issued by The Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS). Another incentive is that palm oil companies that do not meet the requirements as per the guidelines would have limited access to financing options for their business operations. Thus, this method would directly affect the major palm oil companies.



Source C and D agree that there are various effective measures to deal with the haze problem. Source C says Wilmar International “has taken an active role in reducing the occurrence of haze” via their “No Burn policy”. Source D says that the Associations of Bank in Singapore (ABS) has “issued guidelines on responsible financing” of plantation groups. This shows that active efforts have been made to tackle the haze problem.

Source C and D however disagrees on the full effectiveness of the measures. Source C says that while the No-Burn policy is working towards corporate responsibility in the haze problem, “fires may occasionally occurs in our plantations, especially during dry seasons”. Source D however did not mention about possible ineffectiveness of the measures and in fact called the ABS move “a timely one”. This means that Source D is confident that the measures will be effective, while Source C recognises possible problems.

Source C and D would disagree on the effectiveness of the measures as they originate from two different viewpoints. Source C is from the Wilmar International which is a leading key player in the agribusiness of palm oil production. As such, it will definitely speak from a corporate perspective to find a solution that best merges corporate responsibility and profit, which explains why they are modest about the long term effectiveness of the solutions despite promising active efforts. Source D on the other hand originates from an online newspaper. With no corporate benefits in mind, the newspaper is supposed to report on the issue from a macro perspective that takes into account the views of various stakeholders including the ABS and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA).

Source C and D would disagree on the effectiveness of the measures as they have different purposes. Source C wants to reassure the public that Wilmar International is taking an active stance towards irresponsible plantations so as to convince the public to have faith in Wilmar International. Source D on the other hand wants to report on the issue from various viewpoints – corporate, international, regional – so as to give the readers a comprehensive view of the whole haze problem.

(d)

Source E does not make Source F surprising. Source E and Source F both showed that Singaporeans have misconceptions or lack of action on sustainable consumerism with respect to the palm oil industry.

Source E shows a poster that was launched in a ‘We breathe what we buy’ campaign. The poster would be used and released in various platforms for extensive outreach to Singaporeans, to gain as much attention as possible to the message of the campaign. This shows that there is a need for Singaporeans to be more active in promoting sustainable consumerism, by using graphic and impactful images, such as the one used in the poster, where the fire and the toothbrush were used to represent the negative consequences.

Source F also stated the lack of action of sustainable consumerism habits of the public by showing the lack of demand for the inclusion of the Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) trademark on product packaging. Source F also stated the misconception of companies who are licensed to carry the trademark, but “would rather leave out the trademark to avoid



drawing attention to the existence of palm oil in their products". This is aligned to the context of the article which shows that Singaporeans are mostly unable or unwilling to identify green products when making consumer choices.

Source F is not surprising as it is supported by Source A. In Source A, it shows that the schoolchildren, representing the public, is aware that the haze problem is more severe than what is made to seem, but there is a lack of active response to the issue.

Source E does not make Source F surprising as the sources agree on the negative consequences of the haze problem and the importance of consumer choices in the problem. Source E shows us a picture of a toothbrush made of burning trees with toothpaste doubling up as the smoke and a caption "we breathe what we buy". This means that there is a close relationship between our consumer choices as well as the severity of the haze problem and that we should buy products that support sustainable palm oil sources. Source F supports this idea as Source F talks about how some products in the market carry the Certificated Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) labels. Since both sources raise similar points, Source E does not make Source F surprising.

Source E does make Source F surprising as Source E is highlighting the importance of making wise consumer choices as we might be using products from unsustainable sources which contribute to the haze problem while Source F is saying that consumers might not even know about this link as some brands prefer to "leave out the CPSO trademark to avoid drawing attention to the existence of palm oil in their products". Source F also says that we should not judge the sources of the products just because it does not have the CPSO trademark. This contradicts Source E urging consumers to make more informed choices.

Source E does not make Source F surprising as Source F can be supported by the Background Information. Source F says that there are many products in the market related to palm oil sources. This can be supported by the Background Information saying "huge range of everyday products from toothpaste to chocolate, are made using palm oil". Since the Background Information supports Source F, Source F is reliable and hence not surprising.

Source E does not make Source F surprising as Source F can be supported by Source A. Source F highlights how few companies want to acknowledge a link with palm oil sources as seen from "avoid drawing attention to the existence of palm oil in their products". This means that palm oil sources are deemed as something dubious / dodgy / less desirable. Source A supports this by telling us how palm oil companies are good at "gagging". Since the Source A supports Source F, Source F is reliable and hence not surprising.

Source E does not make Source F surprising as it is only normal for the two sources to differ as they serve different purposes. Source E is an advertisement / campaign poster that wants to raise awareness to let consumers know about purchasing products from sustainable sources so as to ease the effects of the haze problem. Source F is an informative article that wants to analyse the problem of pursuing sustainable consumerism so as to let people be aware of the practical realities of doing so.



(e)

Sources A, B, E and F support the statement while Sources C and D do not support the statement.

In Sources A, B, E, and F, the individual is shown to exert a significant power to influence the decisions of the palm oil industry. In Source A, the public is shown to be silenced by measures that provide temporary relief against the haze, as the schoolchildren are saying that “their haze masks aren’t for breathing, they’re for gagging”. The men in the cartoon is shown to be monitoring the schoolchildren from the supposedly safety of a building. It implies that the public are not being given full information on the activities of these palm oil companies which leads to the public not having a loud enough voice to raise their concerns and contribute to the haze issue in a positive way.

Source B supports the statement as it shows that society is encouraged to show solidarity in times of the haze crisis. The PM released a statement to “look out for neighbors and friends”, and led by example by deploying volunteers to “visit residents who are unable to go to the CCs on their own”, to give out “masks to vulnerable and needy Singaporeans at CCs”. This implies that a strong support network will help a nation to better shoulder the strains of a crisis.

OR

Source B supports the statement as it shows the Prime Minister urging Singaporeans to take care of themselves and one another. Source B says “employers should not compromise on the health of their employees” and “please drink plenty of water and avoid going outdoors”. This shows that the government is urging individuals to take responsibility of tackling haze in Singapore.

Source E supports the statement as the poster released in the campaign by the various environmental groups shows a lack of awareness and education among the public for the issue of sustainable consumerism with regards to palm oil industry and the burning of forests. The need for a change within the individual level in a society is important enough to release many such campaigns by these NGOs and other related groups.

OR

Source E supports the statement as it shows how the poster is urging Singaporeans to make wise consumer choices. Source E highlights the importance of making sure we buy products that are from sustainable palm oil sources since “we breathe what we buy”. This shows that our consumer choices may be from non-sustainable palm oil sources which contributes to the haze problem. Hence it is up to us to discern these sources so as not to contribute to the haze problem.

Source F supports the statement as it is proven that there is a lack of demand for CSPO trademarked products and thus, a severe lack of consciousness in green consumerism. All these implies that to effect a positive change in the haze situation, there must be a certain level of awareness and willingness to participate in promoting action within the individual level.

(Note: Source F can go both directions – alternative answer

Source F does not support the statement as it shows that while individuals try to make informed consumer choices to avoid contributing to the haze problem, they are unable to do



so as some companies “leave out the CPSO trademark to avoid drawing attention to the existence of palm oil in their products”. This shows that the companies themselves have a bigger role to play in ensuring sustainable palm oil production and not the individuals who play a passive role in the marketing of the products.)

Sources C and D do not support the statement as they believe that the palm oil companies are responsible for tackling the haze issue.

In Source C, the sustainability report included policies that are set up in a large palm oil company, Wilbur International, which involves a No Burn policy, where “suppliers have been notified that any international breach of our No Burn policy will result in the immediate termination of business dealings.”

OR

Source C does not support the statement as it shows how large corporate firms have a direct role in tackling haze in Singapore. Source C tells us how Wilmar International – a leading agribusiness dealing with palm oil production – has taken active efforts via their “No Burn policy” which punishes offenders with “immediate termination of all business dealings”. This shows that only large corporations have the ability to ensure corporate responsibility using legal means.

In Source D, the Association of Banks Singapore (ABS) released guidelines following the Transboundary Pollution Act 2014, which regulates financing options for palm oil companies. These sources imply that the major palm oil industry players are solely responsible for tackling the haze issue.

OR

Source D does not support the statement as it shows how large corporate firms have a direct role in tackling haze in Singapore. Source D talks about how the Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) “has issued guidelines on responsible financing”. This shows that to tackle the haze problem, we must first target the financial sources of these plantations guilty of burning forests.

Source C may not be reliable as it is challenged by other sources. Source C is from Wilmar International, a leading agribusiness dealing with palm oil production and it is trying to reassure the public that it is being responsible for the production process and is actively dealing with businesses violating the “No-Burn Policy” so as to maintain its corporate image. This is challenged by Source A which hints that such large corporations tend to be hiding the truth for profit since they are good at “gagging”. Source F also challenges Source C as it tells us how some large companies are not telling consumers the truth about their palm oil sources. Since Source C is challenged by other sources, it is less reliable.



SECTION B: SRQ

a) Singapore is becoming an increasingly diverse society in this vastly cosmopolitan and globalised world. Such diversity can be seen from our varied food choices, interracial / interethnic marriages, as well as our rich popular culture. In my opinion, Singapore is becoming an increasingly diverse society due to the rising economic challenges which compels the government to seek more manpower as well as the fact that Singapore is an attractive destination for foreigners to settle down in.

Firstly, to deal with the rising economic competitiveness, Singapore has to ensure that it has enough labour. Since Singapore is grappling with an ageing population and declining birth rates, we are in need of labour and manpower. This resulted in the Singapore government's open door policy when it comes to engaging foreign labour. These foreigners may join the Singapore workforce in both white-collared and blue-collared jobs. Those highly skilled ones may hail from the developed Western world to take up office and banking jobs in Singapore, while those lowly skilled ones mainly focus on labour-intensive manual work in the construction and service industry. This will result in a broad range of employees in the Singapore workforce. As these foreigners settle down into Singapore to work, they bring with them their own unique cultures and traditions. A consequence of this would be the birth and flourishing of ethnic enclaves such as Little Thailand in Golden Mile Complex, Little Myanmar in Peninsula Plaza and Little Philippines in Lucky Plaza. These are popular locations for foreign communities to gather and interact. Sometimes Singaporeans may even fancy trying out these unique food products. An example would be how some Singaporeans enjoy eating Jollibee. Hence, this makes Singapore an increasingly diverse society.

Secondly, Singapore is also having an increasingly diverse society as it is an attractive destination for foreigners. This is attributed to the following reasons: we are a safe and politically stable country; we have vast economic potential, sound infrastructure in terms of education and healthcare. Singapore attracts a lot of foreigners to come and settle down here permanently as we are famed for our low crime rates. Our tough legal system also ensures social stability and political soundness. Singapore is harsh on criminals as seen from the existence of the death penalty for crimes like drug trafficking and murder. Being at the crossroad of Asia and the Western world also makes us an ideal location for investors who are shifting their focus to Asia and Southeast Asia in the last decade. Singapore's bilingualism also makes us a potential communicative channel between the East and the West. Lastly, Singapore's top education system with first-class universities such as the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University being the best in Asia, also attracts many foreigners to settle here. Our top-rated healthcare system also compels many visitors to seek medical treatments here in Singapore. All in all, Singapore being an attractive destination has the effect of bringing in many foreigners who help add to the diversity of the society.

Optional (additional reason): the fact that Singapore is a small country requires us to be open to foreign influences. This explains why we are situated at a comfortable midpoint between western and eastern influences. This is also the reason why our culture is so diverse. Singaporeans enjoy the Western influences as in American pop culture where we listen to popular artistes like Taylor Swift and Justin Bieber. We are also fans of Western blockbuster movies such as the Marvel series and the other superhero-themed movies on Netflix. Other



Singaporeans enjoy the Mandopop culture from Taiwan and the increasingly popular Korean pop culture. This manifests itself in the vast popularity of dramas, movies, and other merchandises. This is the reason why Singapore is always a pit stop for these Western and Eastern celebrities to hold their concerts and fan meets. Popular artistes like Jay Chou and Ed Sheeran are due to perform in Singapore in 2017 and 2018. With such influences, Singaporeans are very open to trying the other cultural products such as food and fashion, as seen from how Korean pop is gaining mass popularity among Singaporeans.

In conclusion, Singapore is becoming an increasingly diverse society due to our open door policy towards foreign labour and foreigners being attracted to our sound system and infrastructure. Such occurrences result in Singapore being very cosmopolitan in terms of its cultures and practices.

OR

Technological advancements progressed almost exponentially with the passing years. When transport is made more feasible and cheap, the settlers in Singapore may call their own families and friends from the different countries to come to Singapore. This promotes an even greater growth of diversity in Singapore. The Singapore government also created a vibrant environment to attract people from other countries. Some of the methods include having a world-class airport, that was ranked first in the world for many consecutive years, and promoting Singapore as a city of gardens. These methods greatly enhance the attractiveness of living in Singapore and contributes to the growth of diversity. Aside from accessibility to transport, technological progress also induced the growth of niches and hubs in the field of science, technology, and the arts. Singapore established the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) which contributes to research initiatives in Singapore. They hire scientists from all over the globe with the necessary expertise to participate in their researches, and funds exchange programmes for students. The exchange of skills and knowledge in this example promotes a partnership between Singapore and other countries. This may encourage mingling of people from diverse backgrounds, and may lead to the talent within these sectors to take up the Singapore PR citizenship.

Lastly, the rise of the Internet and social media leads to a globalization of products and cultures. For instance, the latest rise in the K-pop scene induced a demand of Korean related products from Singaporeans, such as music, beauty products, and cuisines, compared to about a decade ago. More Singaporeans travel aboard to these countries that interested them, and may bring back to Singapore diverse cultural practices from the travel experiences. This may also lead to opportunities for a fusion between two or more cultures with respect to food and entertainment. An example is the creation of the fusion dishes such as the Nasi Lemak burger and Nasi Lemak maki by Maki-san which fused Malay and Western flavours, and Malay and Japanese flavours respectively.

b)

Living in a diverse society has its pros and cons. While we are enjoying diverse cultures, we are also facing strong competition in terms of economic challenges. In my opinion, I feel that the positive impacts are more significant than the negative impacts.



The positive impacts are numerous. Firstly, our increasingly diverse society means that there are more people from various cultures here to share their skills and expertise to enhance our economic competitiveness. With varied skills and expertise, this makes Singapore's economy very attractive as we offer a diverse package to potential investors. This explains Singapore's open hiring policy with regard to foreigner lecturers and professors. National University of Singapore's staff body is hugely diverse with professors hailing from Germany and China, all of whom specialising in varied subjects. These people add diversity to the teaching culture in the school and value-add students immensely. In terms of social impacts, our diverse society allows us to be more cosmopolitan and understanding towards others. With the increased number of foreigners in our country, we are exposed to various different cultures such as Korean, Filipino, Indian and Japanese traditions and customs. This means that we are able to interact with people who hail from different parts of the world; we can learn their languages and share their interests. This can also manifest itself in the increasingly diverse food choices we have in Singapore which is a blessing to Singaporeans since we are a country obsessed with food. An example of such would be how hawker centres now serve authentic Korean, Japanese and South Chinese cuisines for all to enjoy.

However, living in a diverse society has its cons. Increased friction and conflict is inevitable. Not all Singaporeans are receptive to foreigners. Some are quite hostile towards them as they view foreigners as competitors for public goods like transport, healthcare and education. Singaporeans lamented the loss of jobs due to the ease of hiring foreigners. Local graduates also complain about how difficult it is to find a job given the influx of foreign scholars. This may result in xenophobic reactions and increased disputes. In the past few years, such disputes have made the news. An example would be the infamous Curry Incident of 2011 where a Chinese immigrant family complained about the curry smell coming from the flat of their Indian neighbours. The dispute supposedly ended with the mediation team requesting the Indian family to only cook curry when the Chinese family is out. This sparked a massive public outcry about foreigners being disrespectful to local cultures. Many Singaporeans saw this as an infringement of our rights as Singaporeans to enjoy our uniquely Singaporean food. Another incident was the case of the British expat Anton Casey who posted about Singaporeans being poor and smelly. This sparked public fury as Singaporeans were angry about the foreigner being rude to Singaporean culture while living on Singaporean soil. Thus, this shows that living in a diverse society sometimes has its cons.

In my opinion, I feel that the positive impacts outweigh the negative impacts. This is because the negative impacts such as increasing xenophobia and disputes can be mediated with educational campaigns and policies facilitating mutual understanding and respect. For example, the Singapore government does plan cultural activities to help foreigners and Singaporeans understand each other better. One such example would be conducting community celebrations of festivals which implores foreigners and locals to interact and understand each other better. Since the negative impacts of living in a diverse society can be mediated, I feel that the more important thing to do is to maximize the positive impacts. These positive impacts can be enhanced and further capitalised on as we are living in a globalised society. It is impossible for Singapore to close our doors to foreigners since we are an open society which depends on regional and international influences to survive and thrive. Hence, it is of utmost importance for Singapore to capitalise on the positive impacts of diversity than be



bogged down by the negative ones.

OR

I agree to a large extent that the positive impacts of living in a diverse society is more significant than the negative impact.

The exchange of knowledge and skills gives rise for opportunities for skills transfer and a positive complementary partnership. Parties involved stand to gain from sharing their skills and expertise to strengthen collaborations within industries in Singapore. The A*STAR funding of research initiatives in Singapore provides an avenue for local talents to learn from foreign talents. This creates a skillful workforce environment that is useful in propelling Singapore to further heights in the pursuit of knowledge and excellence. The exchange of information and skills would make Singapore be better equipped with advanced technology to meet with rising global threats and issues. As a result, this would promote a more cohesive society as Singaporeans become more well-prepared and thus possess greater confidence in tackling a crisis together.

With the rise of the number of talents in Singapore, competition for resources is becoming more tense. There are numerous voices who spoke out against the foreign talents in the recent years. These were aggravated by the clashes in cultural practices of the different cultures involved, especially when observed in public spaces. These voices may stem from a fear of losing their rights as a citizen in terms of security and jobs. In my opinion, these fears are founded on a lack of communication with the foreign talents. There are many examples of different cultures and foreign talents living harmoniously together in Singapore.

Although there are possibilities for prejudice and misconceptions, there are also opportunities to learn and grow from these experiences. These opportunities, such as new fusion food, and creating activities in common spaces, will create a Singapore that will be better equipped to handle future issues in Singapore with regards to diversity.