

# GENERAL PAPER I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. Should we bring back woolly mammoths from the dead?
2. What eligibility rules should apply to athletes who are transgender or intersex?
3. What's wrong with the Oscars?
4. Should we give what we can?
5. Does *Homo sapiens* have responsibilities to other species?
6. What, if any, limitations on immigration are defensible?
7. 'The oppressed will always believe the worst about themselves' (FRANTZ FANON). Discuss.
8. Why are conspiracy theories so enduring?
9. If Margaret Thatcher and Nelson Mandela had died on the same day, whose death should the BBC have reported as its top story?
10. Why teach poetry to children?
11. 'We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology' (CARL SAGAN). Does this matter?
12. Why are top female tennis players so much more prominent than top female footballers?
13. 'To photograph is to confer importance' (SUSAN SONTAG). Discuss.
14. Would it matter if newspapers ceased to be printed?
15. 'Taste is first and foremost distaste, disgust and visceral intolerance of the taste of others' (PIERRE BOURDIEU). Is it?
16. Is it 'colonialist' for the UK to pressure its former colonies to repeal anti-sodomy laws imposed during the period of British rule?
17. Are streaming services good for music?
18. 'We know what happens to people who stay in the middle of the road. They get run down' (ANEURIN BEVAN). Discuss.
19. Which concept is more fundamental, shape or colour?

[OVER]

20. What should be done to achieve greater take-up of vaccinations?
21. Should more artwork be shredded?
22. Has single-sex education had its day?
23. Can food be both sustainable and affordable?
24. Can a place of worship comfortably function as a museum or heritage site as well?
25. How choosy should charities be about those from whom they accept donations?
26. 'These extreme inequalities that divide us are human-made. May I even say, man-made.' (WINNIE BYANYIMA). Discuss.
27. Which writer, from any period, would be most dismayed by how they are viewed today?

## GENERAL PAPER II

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. Do ancient and modern slavery differ in nature?
2. '[Female judges'] experience of leading women's lives allows us to see things that the men cannot always see' (BARONESS HALE). Discuss.
3. Is Artificial Intelligence already beyond our control?
4. 'Millions in Africa are poorer today because of aid; misery and poverty have not ended but increased' (DAMBISA MOYO). Discuss.
5. What, if anything, is wrong with neoliberal economics?
6. Should we stop reading authors because of their political views?
7. Has masculinity ever not been 'in crisis'?
8. Is the Anthropocene a useful concept?
9. Should beauty be taxed? Should ugliness be compensated?
10. North Macedonia: what's in a name?
11. In what sense are civil servants servants?
12. Do the methods of philosophy differ fundamentally from those of the natural sciences?
13. Can the history of emotions be more than the history of cultural representations of emotions?
14. What does it mean to live a feminist life?
15. Should Facebook and Google be required to pay money for the information they acquire about people?
16. Does anything justify stripping someone of their citizenship?
17. 'The gendered metaphor of the "faithful" translation, whose worth is always secondary to that of the male-authored original, acquires a particular edge in the context of a translation by a woman [...]' (EMILY WILSON, translator of the *Odyssey*). Discuss.
18. Is the future Asian?
19. What should the geographical and temporal limits of Classics be?

20. Is it useful to categorize writers as e.g. 'Black', 'queer', or 'postcolonial'?
21. Is the justice system just?
22. 'Novels arise out of the shortcomings of history' (NOVALIS). Discuss.
23. Do you own your body?
24. How useful is the analysis of objects from the past in furthering historical understanding?
25. Are there any unanswerable questions?

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1. Is ignorance bliss?
2. Why spend money on public art?
3. Defend tweeting.
4. When is charity wrong?
5. Are there too many books?
6. Does Google know us better than we do?
7. Are Old Masters overrated?
8. What is a gift?
9. Can a literary competition be fair?
10. Are consumers in search of bargains complicit in modern slavery?
11. Would you rather be a vampire or a zombie?
12. Do we value our security too highly?
13. Is it possible to imagine a society without law?
14. What is the point of voting?
15. When, if ever, should one prioritise form over function?
16. Are emotions irrational?
17. Does it matter if we are alone in the universe?
18. Are there topics one should not joke about?
19. Compare a contemporary political leader to a character in mythology.
20. Are male and female outdated concepts?
21. Should there be a University Church?
22. How should we close the gender pay gap?
23. 'Music came to a full stop with Brahms' (WITTGENSTEIN). Discuss.
24. Should we even try to understand how the brain works?

[OVER]

25. 'Richest 1% on target to own two-thirds of all wealth by 2030' (THE OBSERVER).  
Does this matter?
26. What, if any, are the advantages of binge-watching?
27. Is the dominance of English in Western popular music regrettable?
28. What sort of equality ought to exist in a family?
29. 'We write to taste life twice, in the moment, and in retrospection' (ANAI'S NIN).  
Discuss.

## GENERAL PAPER II

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. Is Shakespeare too good for actors?
2. Should signatory States withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights?
3. Is the internet beyond effective regulation?
4. How important are market forces in the development of the arts?
5. Is globalization in retreat?
6. Is it time to give up on the Nobel Peace Prize?
7. 'In a well-functioning democracy, people do not live in echo chambers (CASS SUNSTEIN). Do you agree?
8. 'Much more exhilaration and gusto can be got out of literature if one takes a more devious way in' (DON FOWLER). Discuss.
9. Is tourism a necessary evil?
10. Can we teach machines to be good?
11. How useful is the concept of decline to a historian?
12. 'Television is a form of entertainment which permits millions of people to listen to the same joke at the same time, and yet remain lonesome' (T. S. ELIOT). Are social media any better?
13. Should 'no-fault divorce' be recognized?
14. Is literature inherently international?
15. What will be the next disruptive innovation?
16. 'The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it' (NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON). Discuss.
17. Did the Enlightenment happen?
18. Is the centre-left doomed to extinction?
19. Does time heal historic injustice?
20. Should there be a right to financial security?

[OVER]

21. 'Microhistory: the ultimate example of historians being captured by their evidence.' Discuss.
22. What can fiction do that other forms of artistic expression cannot?
23. Is Classics racist?
24. Does it matter whether we have free will?
25. 'Disaster is rarely as pervasive as it seems from recorded accounts' (BARBARA TUCHMAN). Discuss.
26. Is it permissible to use animals in scientific research and, if so, in what circumstances?
27. Should sugar be taxed?
28. Is it ever justified to use force in breach of international laws?
29. 'The age of utopias is over.' Do you agree?
30. 'Writing saved me from the sin and inconvenience of violence' (ALICE WALKER). Discuss.

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1. How should we prepare for the end of the world?
2. Why are there still Communists?
3. Do we owe duties to the dead?
4. If you were a dictator, what would you ban?
5. Is the European ideal kaput?
6. 'Sexuality is to feminism what work is to Marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away' (CATHARINE MACKINNON). Discuss.
7. Account for the rise of internet memes.
8. Can sports make a nation?
9. Defend a neglected classic.
10. 'The second Elizabethan age is likely to be remembered as a reign of uninterrupted national decline.' Is it?
11. Does it matter what we eat?
12. What is the use of magic?
13. 'In the age of pictorial reproduction the meaning of paintings is no longer attached to them' (JOHN BERGER). Has the age of Instagram altered our ways of seeing?
14. Is cynicism inescapable?
15. Should journalists always tell the truth?
16. Can a deal be art?
17. What is 'alt' about the 'alt-right'?
18. Are the only good answers those that destroy the question?
19. Is the sampling of music theft or quotation?
20. Invent a new idiom—then spill the beans.
21. Should you love your neighbour?

[OVER]

22. Whose interests does WikiLeaks serve?
23. Is there such a thing as bad taste in visual arts, music or literature?
24. 'Archimedes will be remembered when Aeschylus is forgotten, because languages die and mathematical ideas do not' (G. H. HARDY). Discuss.
25. Can democracy enthuse only those who are deprived of it?
26. Debunk a modern myth.
27. For what should we ask forgiveness?
28. Is censorship good for creativity?

## GENERAL PAPER II

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. Can satire be constructive?
2. Why is the price of housing so high?
3. Is sex work just work?
4. What does the European Union owe to the Roman Empire?
5. Is incompetence the most underrated force in human history?
6. Should we put the brakes on globalization?
7. 'All lives matter.' Do they?
8. Is there any such thing as an original work of literature?
9. Make the case for mandatory retirement.
10. Can economists study irrational choice?
11. Does it matter if a language dies out?
12. Can national borders be anything other than artificial?
13. Should Bob Dylan have won the Nobel Prize?
14. 'The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers' (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE). Discuss.
15. Why is 'journalistic' a pejorative term?
16. How should juries be selected?
17. 'The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.' Discuss.
18. Is the future of the humanities teaching Great Books to engineers?
19. Are there any questions that should be beyond the pale of philosophical discussion?
20. 'When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody' (W.S. GILBERT). Discuss.
21. '[P]hilosophy is dead. Philosophers have not kept up with modern developments in science' (STEPHEN HAWKING). Has he missed the point?
22. What makes a good citizen?

[OVER]

23. What properties should a well-constructed universal language possess?
24. 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (AUDRE LORDE). Discuss.
25. If we change the ending of 'Little Red Riding Hood' is it still 'Little Red Riding Hood'?
26. What if there were no hypothetical questions?

# GENERAL PAPER I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. What should determine the pay of CEOs?
2. Should technology companies cooperate with governments in matters of national security?
3. Should Rhodes fall?
4. Propose an image or an event that defines the twentieth century.
5. Do referendums subvert parliamentary democracy?
6. Are there any 'Asian values'?
7. Why are traditional political parties losing popularity in the Euro-American world?
8. Is it acceptable that most of us have much less exposure to the laws of thermodynamics than the works of Shakespeare?
9. Are open-access journals the future of academic publishing?
10. What is the difference between a team of stars and a star team?
11. What can be done about unconscious bias?
12. What impact does inequality have upon a nation's prosperity?
13. Is 'forgetting' always a problem?
14. In what ways, if any, is the refugee crisis distinctive?
15. 'Cowardice ... is the most terrible vice.' (MIKHAIL BULGAKOV) Discuss.
16. What did Shakespeare do for us?
17. Should you always read the book first?
18. What consequences can immorality in fiction have in fact?
19. Why is the idea of apocalypse appealing?
20. Is Putin's Russia a threat to the West?
21. Is there a public interest in publishing kiss and tell stories?
22. Are there any systems of exchange that should not be regarded as markets?

[OVER]

23. 'The caterpillar who knew himself would never become a butterfly' (ANDRÉ GIDE)  
Discuss.
24. What do terrorists want?
25. What is the point, if any, of requiring students to write essays?

## GENERAL PAPER II

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. Why does it matter how Palmyra is destroyed?
2. Cultural property – a contradiction in terms?
3. Do we really need a literary canon?
4. ‘I prefer the most unfair peace to the most righteous war.’ (CICERO) Do you agree?
5. Is a common language an essential part of a culture?
6. Can a person who has always been wealthy imagine what it is like to be poor?
7. Will ‘big data’ increase or decrease the importance of theory in the social sciences?
8. What features of a text enable it to outlive the immediate circumstances of its production?
9. Why don’t books of literary criticism sell?
10. ‘The truth is that no definition of tragedy more elaborate than “very sad” has ever worked.’ (TERRY EAGLETON) Discuss.
11. Should global history be about more than movement and connection?
12. Is it time for historians to read less Foucault and more Weber?
13. What history should children learn?
14. Defend diplomatic history.
15. When and why was there a ‘great divergence’ in economic performance between Europe and Asia?
16. Is popular politics always conservative?
17. Is Third World poverty the legacy of colonialism?
18. Has the importance of 1968 been overstated?
19. ‘More than two thirds of Britons support gender equality, but just 7 per cent would call themselves feminists.’ (DAILY TELEGRAPH) Discuss.
20. Should poverty ever be a defence against a charge of shoplifting?
21. ‘A woman should not have to ask the permission of two doctors to have an abortion.’ Discuss.

[OVER]

22. What, if any, are the lessons of Chilcot?
23. 'A phrase we often used to avoid punishment contained something true, hence uncontrollable, hence dangerous. The formula was: I didn't do it on purpose.' (ELENA FERRANTE) Discuss.
24. 'We are fallen creatures. All we can do is to uphold the laws, all of us, without allowing the memory of justice to fade.' (J.M. COETZEE) Discuss.
25. 'To say of whatever we think people ought to have that they have a right to it is not to say very much.' (MICHAEL WALZER) Discuss.
26. Are balanced budgets a legitimate moral ideal?
27. Is speculation in commodity markets morally defensible?
28. Is racial profiling ever legitimate?
29. Should FIFA be placed under the governance of the United Nations?
30. Should an architect refuse to design a dictator's vanity project?
31. Should the study of non-Western philosophy be a requirement for a philosophy degree in the UK?
32. Will philosophy eventually be absorbed by the sciences?
33. 'The distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.' (JUDITH BUTLER) Discuss.
34. Is experimental philosophy just bad psychology?

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1. Do primary schools need a national curriculum?
2. Improve the rules of any one sport.
3. What is the new black?
4. 'Popular music thrives on endless repetition – nothing new since Nirvana.' Do you agree, and is this a problem?
5. Do religions have to be theistic?
6. Ought human beauty to be healthy?
7. Can you still be an explorer?
8. What wouldn't you photograph?
9. Are you Charlie?
10. Is war anti-social?
11. Should all debts be repaid?
12. Should the Government stop UK nationals from travelling to Syria to fight?
13. Fix the UK's parliaments.
14. Should politics be exciting?
15. Are there too many of us?
16. Are some sports necessarily class-specific?
17. Is there a sense in which capitalism is a transformation of slavery?
18. 'Work is the source of nearly all the misery in the world'. So, should we abolish work?
19. In what ways might music be usefully compared to language?
20. Why prefer an original painting to an excellent copy?
21. Should the police and the armed forces be allowed to strike?
22. Can someone with a 21st-century sensibility understand the literature of past ages?
23. Why do we go out of our way to watch sad films or plays?

[OVER]

24. Why do women and men not receive equal pay?
25. Can you be a feminist and get married in a white wedding dress?
26. Twenty-seven British Prime Ministers have been Oxford alumni. What is the right response to this?
27. Is it time for schools to replace the teaching of foreign languages with instruction in computer coding languages?
28. Is race real?
29. Make a robust case against keeping calm and carrying on.
30. Does the internet bring out the worst in people?
31. What, if anything, is wrong with risk?
32. What is the most important law of nature?
33. Do we now have too much data?

## GENERAL PAPER II

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

1. Did the ancients have any concept of rights?
2. How important was tourism in the ancient world?
3. Did the ancients keep pets? How do we know?
4. ‘What have the Romans ever done for us?’ [MONTY PYTHON]. Discuss.
5. Should governments pay ransom to hostage-takers?
6. Who should rescue asylum seekers stranded at sea?
7. Is freedom of choice best served by compelling people to make a choice?
8. Are rich people worse parents?
9. ‘Stories of imagination tend to upset those without one.’ [TERRY PRATCHETT]. Discuss.
10. ‘It might be possible to formulate a law of increasing Philistinism: the more money involved in art, the more it is adulterated, and the less real art is produced.’ Discuss.
11. Does good writing do good?
12. Make the case for fan fiction.
13. ‘Archaeology is an expensive way of telling us what we already know’ [PETER SAWYER]. Discuss.
14. ‘What about writers of history? Do all *their* labours bring a better return, or just use more time and midnight oil? ... Who will pay a historian as much as someone who reads out the news is paid?’ [JUVENAL, late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE]. Has anything changed?
15. ‘History is properly studied in order to give back to the past the uncertainty that characterises the future.’ Discuss.
16. Big History, big mistake?
17. ‘Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.’ [J. RAWLS]. Do you agree?
18. Is the concept of ‘sovereign statehood’ outdated?
19. Does it pay to be ‘tough on crime’?
20. ‘There is no place for ritual and ceremony in a modern legal system.’ Discuss.

[OVER]

21. How is the relationship between you and your body different from that between you and your online avatar?
22. ‘When we turn from anger we turn from insight, saying we will accept only the designs already known, deadly and safely familiar’. Discuss.
23. Is it possible to cheat yourself?
24. When are apologies meaningful?
25. ‘A conservative is a man with two perfectly good legs who, however, has never learned how to walk forward.’ [F. D. ROOSEVELT]. Discuss.
26. ‘Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies.’ [GROUCHO MARX]. Discuss.
27. ‘When I take action, I’m not going to fire a \$2 million missile at a \$10 empty tent and hit a camel in the butt. It’s going to be decisive.’ [G. W BUSH, after 9/11]. When, if ever, is decisiveness a virtue in a commander-in-chief?
28. ‘Government of the few, by the few, and for the few.’ [HILLARY CLINTON]. Is this a fair characterisation of modern politics?