

GENERAL PAPER I

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions

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 Are male and female outdated concepts?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

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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 1st and early 2nd 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?

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1. 'How can you know anything about literature if all you've done is read books?' [GEOFF DYER]
2. Should you be allowed internet access during this exam?
3. Does the future of nutrition lie with chemistry?
4. When we make contact with an extra-terrestrial civilization, what should we tell them is humanity's greatest achievement?
5. Have email, blogs and tweets restored the primacy of writing?
6. Do we need borders?
7. 'Thinking is my fighting.' [VIRGINIA WOOLF, 1940] Discuss.
8. Which peoples should be considered 'indigenous'?
9. Should there be such a thing as intellectual property?
10. What is good about 'Big data'?
11. Is hip-hop/rap more political than the Eurovision Song Contest?
12. Why do autocrats oppress?
13. Are democracy and nationalism allies or enemies?
14. What accounts for the success of the gay rights movement in the West?
15. Is Edward Snowden a hero or a villain?
16. 'More boys from Eton went to Oxford and Cambridge than boys eligible for free school meals.' [MICHAEL GOVE] What should be done about it?
17. Are cooperatives doomed to fail?
18. Is the physicists' sought-for 'theory of everything' a chimera?
19. 'Businesses owned by responsible and organized merchants will eventually surpass those owned by wealthy rulers.' [IBN KHALDUN, *c.* 1377] Discuss.
20. Must an idol have died young?
21. Is it possible to dress rationally?

[OVER]

22. Is cosmetic surgery wrong?
23. Did Eve make the right choice?
24. Postmodernism – *sooo* last century. Discuss.
25. Why, seemingly, does the public have a taste for abstract art but not for atonal music?
26. ‘Fright is fun, but only up to a point.’ [EVA FIGES] Has contemporary culture passed that point?
27. ‘we owe most of our pleasures to illusion; woe to those who lose it’ [EMILIE DU CHATELET, *c.* 1740] Discuss.
28. ‘the sole end of science is the honour of the human mind, ... under this title a question about numbers is worth as much as a question about the system of the world.’ [C.G.J. JACOBI, 1830] Discuss.
29. Are sting operations defensible?
30. Is rising life expectancy a good thing?

GENERAL PAPER II

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1. 'Every collection of human beings ... preserves its fables and its history in the archives of the shaman and the *griot* and the bard's memory.' [DEREK WALCOTT] Discuss.
2. 'Not just some, but *all* writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and a fascination with mortality – by a desire to make the risky trip to the Underworld, and to bring something or someone back from the dead.' [MARGARET ATWOOD] Discuss.
3. 'Tell all the truth ... But tell it slant.' [EMILY DICKINSON] Is this sound advice to writers?
4. Can a good person be a really good novelist?
5. Some languages, for example French and Italian, do not distinguish clearly between 'history' and 'story'. Should we be warned?
6. What is, or should be, 'global history'?
7. What is the role of the 'hard sciences' in historical research?
8. 'The Labor Movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress.' [MARTIN LUTHER KING] Discuss.
9. Does the teaching of economics need a radical overhaul?
10. Is ever-rising inequality inevitable under capitalism?
11. Should the richest part of a country have the right to secede?
12. How should we measure the cost of climate change?
13. Should prisoners have the right to vote?
14. Should litigation be encouraged?
15. Does it matter that there is only one woman judge on the UK Supreme Court?
16. Does it matter what a judge had for breakfast?
17. Did people have human rights in the Paleolithic era?
18. When Romeo bribes the apothecary to sell him a drug, the apothecary says, 'My poverty but not my will consents.' Is that a coherent thing for him to say?
19. Privatization of public services: solution or problem?

[OVER]

20. 'If it be desirable that the public servants should be contented with small salaries, it is more desirable that they should be willing to serve gratuitously, and most desirable that they should pay for the liberty of serving' [J. BENTHAM]. Discuss.
21. What sort of event is most likely to precipitate the abolition of monarchy in Britain?
22. 'I am for violence if non-violence means we continue postponing a solution to the American black man's problem just to avoid violence.' [MALCOLM X] Discuss.
23. 'Death is nothing to us, since when we are there, death is not; and when death is, we are not.' [EPICURUS] Discuss.
24. Should we banish the poets?
25. Is the abortion debate separable from issues of gender?
26. Does mathematics need foundations?
27. If 'excavation is destruction' [MORTIMER WHEELER] can we defend it?
28. Does multilingualism mean multiple identities?
29. 'Domesticating' or 'foreignizing'? Which approach to translation is more appropriate to any one foreign-language book or author you have read?
30. Theories come to Classics to die. Discuss.
31. Is English the new Latin?