

The Application Question (AQ)

28 Jan 2014

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Contents

At the end of today's session, you should be able to respond to all these questions:

- 1) What is the application question (AQ)?
- 2) Where does it appear in the 'A' level comprehension paper?
- 3) When did Cambridge start this question?
- 4) How is the AQ graded?
- 5) Why is it challenging for students (and teachers)?

What is special about the Application question(AQ) ?

Overview of the various types of comprehension questions

- *literal, inferential, language awareness questions, questions on use of punctuation marks, figurative language, summary*
- **Only the AQ requires a student to go beyond the text ideas:**
 1. **You need to** apply **ideas** to your society or other societies
 2. You need to **ENGAGE** with the text ideas in the passage and **EVALUATE** them accordingly.

When did the AQ start and where does it appear?

- The AQ started in 2002 and it is usually worth 8 marks.
- From 2013, it will be increased to 10 marks
- It is the **final question** in the comprehension paper (**rationale**: students would have consolidated their understanding of passage ideas through the short questions and summary and would be better prepared for their AQ)

Past year examples of application questions

Examples of AQs from 'A' level papers:

- 1) 2003 passage on animal rights (**'Which writer's views are you most in sympathy? How relevant are the views raised by both authors to Singapore society?'**)
- 2) 2004 passage on choices in life (**'Do you regard the increased degree of choice available to you and your generation as broadly beneficial or harmful?'**)

Past year examples of application questions

- More examples from 'A' level papers

3) 2005 paper on aggression ('The author suggests some reasons why aggression may play a much reduced role in the future. **How convincing are these reasons**, and do you consider the gains would outweigh the losses if aggression ceased to be a central feature of human behaviour?')

Past year examples of application questions

- More examples from 'A' level papers

4) 2006 passage on freedom (**'How far do you agree with the writer's view? How free do you want to be?'**)

5) 2007 passage on gender revolution (**'To what extent do you agree or disagree with his views?'** Support your answer with examples drawn from your society.)

6) 2010 and 2011 passages (**'How applicable do you find the writer's observations to yourself and your own society?'**)

4 Types of AQs

1. **Do you agree or disagree** with the writer's views?
2. **How convincing** are the writers arguments/views?
3. **Generic Questions:** No link to specific societies/
Singapore.
4. Apply the writer's views/arguments **to the Singapore context**

General requirements of AQs

- Students are expected to **take a stand**
- Students are expected to **engage with text ideas** (i.e **select specific text ideas** to respond to, **refer to them clearly** in their response and **apply them to their society or other societies**)
- **Evaluation skills** (students are expected to consider the merits and drawbacks of the writer's ideas with reference to their own views or society's experience).
- Offer a **balanced perspective**.

How are AQs assessed?

- 4 bands (1-3 marks, 4-6 marks, 7-8, 9-10 marks)
- 4 main components (R, EX, EV and C)

R (requirements)- addressed all parts of the question and balanced?

EX(Explanation)- has the student developed the point with sufficient and apt illustrations?

EV(Evaluation)- has the student evaluated the writer's views, his/her own views and the situation in society?

C(Coherence) – is the response logically organized and fluent?

Why is the AQ challenging for students?

- ✧ Requires **higher order skills** like critical reading and thinking (*inferential understanding/comparative analysis/critical evaluation*) **but** students are usually **passive readers**
- ✧ Requires students to **pick good claims or arguments to respond to** **but** students are **unable to locate the central ideas of writers**. Sometimes, they pick examples instead of the main ideas

Why is the AQ challenging for students?

- ✧ Necessitates **an in-depth analysis of writers' ideas** and assess how their views or society's experiences **are similar or different from writers' viewpoints** **but** students find it **difficult to engage in such comparisons of viewpoints** and their **weak language ability** compounds the problem when they try to link the writer's views to their views and society.
- ✧ Requires **the Linguistic Ability** to present coherent and cogent arguments.
- ✧ Requires excellent **Time Management** skills.

Other challenging issues for students

- ✧ **Misinterpretation** of text ideas
- ✧ **Mere restatement** of text ideas
- ✧ **General inability to argue** why they agree or disagree with something (lack conviction to take a clear position on issues as they rarely read)
- ✧ **Poor time management** (a major problem)

Acquiring the skills for AQ

- Critical reading and thinking are skills that take time to develop.

Practice in this **life skill** starts NOW:

- **Active reading and thinking skills:**

- ❖ Strategies to process information through thinking frameworks (e.g. Paul's Wheel)
- ❖ Basic reading techniques
- ❖ Synthesizing different ideas and applying these ideas to different contexts)

Steps to Success (Part 1: Look)

- **Read the Question very carefully – AT LEAST TWICE.**
- **Identify and UNDERLINE the separate requirements** before you begin the answer.
- **Appreciate the different demands of the question** and their respective difficulty – *e.g. does the question require a description of the various points of view? Does the second part of the question require you to evaluate arguments and apply them to another situation?*
- **Note time management** – i.e. how much time to spend on each part of the question.
- ✧ **Rule of Thumb: The harder the task, the greater the reward. Allocate more time to the parts that require higher order thinking skills such as evaluation/application.**

Steps to Success (Part 2: LEAP)

- ① **Locate the appropriate material** (Find the relevant information from the passage).
 - ② **Evaluate the information** (Assess the value/validity of the information).
 - ③ **Apply the information** (Appreciate the relevance of the material to another situation/area and apply it as specified by the question).
 - ④ **Plan/Organise your work before you write** (Organise your answer into different parts and divide the points into paragraphs).
- ✧ You MUST ensure that your answer is **well-structured, balanced, comprehensive, coherent and cogent.**

In a nutshell....

- To do well in an AQ:
 - ❖ one needs to be a **critical reader** and **thinker**
 - ❖ and **support one's views with concrete examples** drawn from one's own society or other societies.