

## Markers' report by kwok

### Q11

#### **Should we be concerned about the surge in the popularity of cosmetic surgery?**

Students who attempted this question were generally not careful in the treatment of all the keywords present. Those who did well were able to present a cogent argument with scope and depth of areas of concern and evidence to substantiate the claims.

The question assumes that the popularity of cosmetic surgery is evident in society; what is more pressing is the surge of such an occurrence. Students who are able to discern such a difference tend to produce an essay with greater engagement.

It, of course, helps that the essay does not just focus on Korea.

Quite a few scripts also talked about how the surge in the popularity of cosmetic surgery will lead to economic growth of a country. How this can happen bewilders the readers as the essay launches into an in-depth economic theoretical discussion. However, if the essay is able to prove that certain countries (eg: Thailand, Korea) bank on such a niche market, it will be a valid claim.

Some essays talk about how, because people in Africa are starving, we should not be spending obscene amount of money on such vain pursuit. This actually poses a question: should the existence of poverty in the world force one to stop spending? Such digression in the essay is a red herring<sup>1</sup>: the original question is not about spending money: it is about looking good through surgical procedures.

Some also argue that we should be concerned about the surge in the popularity of cosmetic surgery because the poor cannot afford it since it is an expensive procedure. Such a claim assumes that having cosmetic surgery is a must, which we know isn't. Some go on further to argue that it is necessary to go for cosmetic surgery because it makes you more employable, but in the same essay it was argued to be morally wrong. Such contradictions are usually not resolved in the essay and it poses contradictions to the readers.

A lot of scripts talk about how materialism is a result of (or a cause of) cosmetic surgery without establishing the relationship between the two. As it is, no essay managed to establish a sensible relationship between materialism and the popularity of cosmetic surgery.

A couple of scripts talked about how the observation of such a surge is actually a realisation of society's deep-seated discrimination against the ugly, and it makes us ponder over our values. Such scripts go beyond talking about the concern over the issue and question the prejudice that we already hold. Such an extension of discussion is credited when the essay has satisfied the requirements of the question. Some scripts argue that in order not to be teased by others, we should have the right to do cosmetic surgery—aren't such scripts condoning discrimination? (An aside: quite a handful of scripts are peppered with rhetorical questions, and because these questions usually beg the obvious, they do not add value to the thought-process. They make you sound overly emotional, if not unstable.) If the essay explores how normalcy is so entrenched in society, and that births the sad truth that certain deformed looks are rejected and ostracised and it is impossible to

change those perceptions (eg: lepers' limbs, cleft-lips), then the essay would have done well to set up such a premise. But the essay cannot end there and then, because the question is really about the surge in popularity of cosmetic surgery. Generally, essays which bring forth this point go on to claim that it is only a minority which underwent cosmetic surgery for such a reason and they do not contribute much to the surge. This is valid because the paragraph in those essays is simply exploring the different uses of cosmetic surgery and if the surge can be attributed to such a use—having already satisfied the basic requirements of the question. These essays also make a point to differentiate “ugly” and “disfigurement” where the former can be misconstrued by society while the latter is a result of some unfortunate events.

Some essays are explicated via the multiple perspective approach. It is feasible, but such essays should preferably still sum up these different perspectives to the collective “we” perspective as seen in the question. For instance, the essay's conclusion could talk about what these various perspectives mean to us and where we stand.

In regard to structuring the essay, one trend which stood out was the practice of setting up the premise. Some scripts spent a paragraph establishing the fact that the surge exists—but they do so after having spent a paragraph or so talking about the main point of the argument. The assumption is that the surge exists and if you have skipped that already by launching into the main discussion, then it doesn't look coherent if you 'rewind' the direction of your essay.

With regard to language use, one particular phrase that stood out is “underground surgeons/surgeries”. “Underground economy” is a legitimate North American term, but “underground cosmetic clinics” and its permutations are not frequently used in such a context. Underground clinics could easily refer to medical centres located underground, much like malls in quake-safe countries.

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<sup>i</sup> Red-herring occurred very frequently in Q10 and that generally led to NAQ scripts (instead of talking about education and poverty, many talked about aid and poverty, NGOs and poverty, and other coupling without explicitly mentioning how education is related to the odd coupling.

Although it is almost impossible for GP students to avoid all sorts of fallacies, some should be avoided easily, like those which throw you into a state of NAQ.

Another common fallacy is the straw-man argument, particularly oversimplifying an opponent's argument or inventing a fictitious opponent (in the form of “some might say”) which allows you to easily attack that position. The straw-man becomes a ‘real-man’ if you are able to substantiate the opponent's claim with real evidence.