Exercise walk-through

3.1
Stimulus and philosophical analysis: supported rehearsal

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Philosophy · HL

Choosing the stimulus and the issue

- The **stimulus** must not already be philosophy: no textbook extract, no famous thought experiment.
- Good stimuli are specific and rich: a news photograph, an advertisement, a cartoon, a scene from a film, the rules of a game.
- Find the **issue** by asking core-theme questions about it: what does it assume about persons, freedom, knowledge or what matters?
- A philosophical question is answered by reasoning, not by surveys or experiments.

Common errors

- Choosing a stimulus that is already philosophy, such as a quotation from a philosopher.
- Choosing a stimulus so general ("social media") that the analysis never touches its details.
- Asking an empirical question ("how many people use AI apps?") instead of a philosophical one.

Key terms

- **Philosophical analysis**: the internal assessment: up to 2,000 words analysing a **non-philosophical stimulus**.
- **Non-philosophical stimulus**: an everyday object, such as an advert, photo, cartoon, news story or song lyric, that is not itself philosophy.
- **Framing sentence**: a sentence that joins the stimulus, a concept and the philosophical question.

Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 State the two tests a stimulus must pass. [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.2 What makes a question philosophical rather than empirical? [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 State the two tests a stimulus must pass. [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.1 Non-philosophical (not already philosophy: no textbook extracts, no lifted thought experiments) and specific and the student's own (rich in issue, chosen freely) (2).

2.2 What makes a question philosophical rather than empirical? [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.2 Philosophical questions are answerable by reasoning (conceptual analysis, argument), whereas empirical questions are settled by observation or measurement (2).

Exercises 2.3·2.4

2.3 Name the four components of the treatment. [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.4 What is the “philosophical gallery” failure of an analysis? [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

Exercises 2.3·2.4

2.3 Name the four components of the treatment. [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.3 Explain the concept (with attribution); apply it to the stimulus; develop the argument; consider the objection – with the conclusion following (2 for three or four).

2.4 What is the “philosophical gallery” failure of an analysis? [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.4 The gallery: five philosophers toured by name with no argument of the student’s own: names where reasoning belongs (2).

Exercises 2.5·3.1

2.5 What does the conclusion of the worked analysis own? [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

3.1 *(Framing style.)* A cartoon shows a commuter stepping over a rough sleeper outside a luxury shop window. Write the framing sentence for an analysis of this stimulus, and name the concept and the question. [4]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

Exercises 2.5·3.1

2.5 What does the conclusion of the worked analysis own? [2]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

2.5 That the reading is one reading: the image supports others, and the analysis states that limit rather than claiming the only interpretation (2).

3.1 *(Framing style.)* A cartoon shows a commuter stepping over a rough sleeper outside a luxury shop window. Write the framing sentence for an analysis of this stimulus, and name the concept and the question. [4]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

3.1 Model framing: “This photograph raises the question of whether the ordinary duty to help survives when the helper’s own plans must be sacrificed” (2). Concept: duty versus charity – the supererogation question (imperfect duties, demandingness) (1). Question: is the commuter’s failure a moral failure or an institutional indictment? (1).

Exercise 3.2

3.2 *(Treatment style.)* Develop the treatment's first move: the duty–charity concept (deontology's imperfect duties and consequentialism's demandingness) applied to the window and the sleeper. [6]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

Exercise 3.2

3.2 *(Treatment style.)* Develop the treatment's first move: the duty–charity concept (deontology's imperfect duties and consequentialism's demandingness) applied to the window and the sleeper. [6]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

3.2 Deontology: duties of aid are imperfect – real but not specifiable as owed to each person at each moment; the maxim of walking past cannot be willed universally, but neither can a maxim of limitless giving (2). Consequentialism: the arithmetic of the window (the good life displayed against the person unseen) makes the failure look enormous, and this is the demandingness objection (how much must morality demand?) (2). Application: the image's STRUCTURE is the problem – the window frames the sleeper out, an arrangement that trains the eye; the commuter inherits a situation the institution made (2).

Exercise 3.3

3.3 *(Objection style.)* State the singer's-pond objection to the worked analysis and draft the reply. [4]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

Exercise 3.3

3.3 *(Objection style.)* State the singer's-pond objection to the worked analysis and draft the reply. [4]

premise 1

premise 2

conclusion

3.3 Objection (the singer's pond): if you would wade in to save a drowning child at the cost of your shoes, distance and salience cannot change the duty – the commuter is the passer-by, the sleeper the child (2). Reply: the pond is an individual emergency; the window is an institutional arrangement – the duty's addressee differs, and the image indicts the arrangement, not the passer-by; the analysis owns that a pond-reading of the same image is possible (2).

Local review guidance: the framing sentence names stimulus, concept AND question in one line; (R1 3.2) apply to the image's specific features, not the general topic; (R1 3.3) the reply concedes what the objection gets right before dividing. Authored guidance.