4.2 HL: Paper 3 unseen-text practice

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS unseen text • assumption • metaphor • attention

Objective

Practise responding to an **unseen text** on a contemporary issue: identify its claims and assumptions, connect it to what you have studied, and write an evaluation.

You must be able to:

- identify the main claim and assumptions of an unseen text
- explain the philosophical issue in your own words
- connect the text to thinkers and arguments you know
- evaluate the text's argument
- write a structured response under time pressure

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ **Unseen text (written for practice)**

> "We are told that smartphones make us free: we can talk to anyone, learn anything, buy whatever we like. But a free person is one who can decide where to put their attention. The phone is designed so that we cannot. Every notification is a small decision taken by someone else. A society that sells its attention has sold its freedom, one minute at a time."

■ **Reading it**

ask	in the text
main claim	smartphones reduce our freedom
key concept	freedom as control of one's attention (a kind of positive liberty)
assumption	design decisions control users; people cannot resist notifications
evidence	none given, only examples and a metaphor ("sells its attention")
links	1.2 freedom; 2.3 positive and negative liberty; 4.1 non-neutral technology

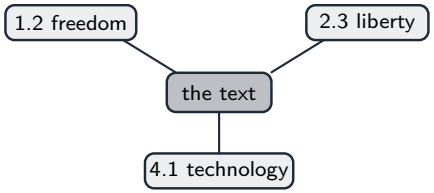
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2 Practice

2.1 State the **main claim** of the unseen text and **one** of its **assumptions**. [2]

2.2 Explain the **metaphor** "A society that sells its attention has sold its freedom", and **one** weakness of using it as evidence. [3]

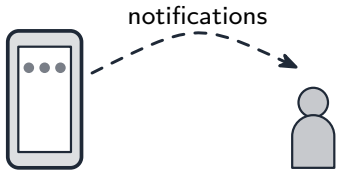
2.3 Connect the text to **two** ideas you have studied. [4]



2.4 Give the strongest **objection** to the text, and a reply its author could make. [6]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(HL Paper 3 style.)* With reference to the unseen text, evaluate the claim that modern technology threatens human freedom. [15]



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Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

main claim: smartphones reduce human freedom; assumption, e.g. people cannot choose to ignore notifications / freedom means control of attention

2.2

attention is treated as a good that companies buy through free apps and sell to advertisers; losing control of attention is presented as losing freedom; weakness: a metaphor is not evidence; it persuades through images, not reasons or data

2.3

any two, explained: positive liberty (Berlin): freedom as real self-control, not just absence of interference; non-neutral technology (Heidegger, Winner): design shapes behaviour; compatibilism: acting on desires shaped by others may still be free; Mill: individuality needs space to think for oneself

2.4

objection clearly stated, e.g. users can switch off notifications or the phone, so their freedom remains (negative liberty); explained with an example; reply: design exploits psychology, so the ability to resist is weak in practice; with support, e.g. features such as infinite scrolling; evaluation of who has the better argument; clear reasoning

3.1

Mark with the markbands: [13-15] clearly focused on the question, clear explanation of the philosophical issue, relevant philosophers and arguments used accurately, counter-arguments evaluated, well-developed critical analysis, different perspectives evaluated, a reasoned conclusion; [10-12] focused, mostly accurate knowledge, analysis with some evaluation; [7-9] some focus, relevant knowledge, mostly narrative or description with limited analysis; [4-6] little focus, limited knowledge, mostly narrative; [1-3] little understanding of the question. Points that may be included: explicit use of the text: its claim, concept of freedom and assumptions; explains freedom: negative and positive liberty; for: attention design, recommendation algorithms, surveillance; non-neutral technology: Heidegger, Winner; against: technology increases options and access to knowledge; negative liberty remains: no one forces use; compatibilist view of shaped desires; a contemporary example in detail; evaluation of the text's argument; a reasoned conclusion

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