

Higher - Personal/Reflective Essay Topics

- a. Then the music started. Nicola raised her head and her fist went up to her throat . . . the music was hot inside her heart. The music boiled inside her. The whole world was this music and she could not listen hard enough." **Write about an experience (not necessarily a musical one) which hit you with the kind of intensity felt by Nicola in this extract.**
- b. A young person's world often appears bounded and restricted by parental and school rules whereas the adult world seems to offer limitless freedoms. When we have an opportunity to explore one of these adult freedoms the experience may prove either disappointing or exhilarating. **Write about how you explored an adult "freedom" of this kind for the first time, reflecting on what you think you gained from the experience.**
- c. "All the lonely people, Where do they all come from ..." The tape played quietly in the background. This was Jennifer's "Lonely and Blue" collection. Now she had the mood right but she still couldn't put pen to paper. A six hundred word essay - 'Alone is not Lonely' - finish for Thursday. She had done her researching. Texts lay strewn on the table in front of her. She turned to the page she had marked in 'The Diary of Anne Frank' - "Far in its innermost depths youth is lonelier than old age." True, but what was it Linda had said about Willy Loman? "Just a little boat looking for a harbour." Then she read the cutting she had taken from the paper only yesterday."We complete each other constantly but grow to a new whole; we form part of all that is, and all that is forms us a soul." Jennifer picked up the pen. **Write Jennifer's essay, "Alone is not Lonely"**
- d. Perhaps, before picking up her pen, Jennifer is moving towards the view that the quality of our lives does depend after all upon our relationships with other people. **Write about your relationships with others, trying to show how such relationships help to make you more complete in yourself.**
- e. "It's the same pattern: they start with Enid Blyton and graduate eventually to Greene, Lawrence or Jane Austen. One thing leads to another in a natural process of development and maturation." (Library spokesman) **How has the course of your personal reading developed over the years? Where did you 'start', what point have you reached and what has given you the greatest pleasure?**
- f. After the Falklands conflict in 1982, one of the army commanders commented thus on the performance of his young troops: "They were only proving for the thousandth time that even the very young, when they find great and real responsibilities thrust upon them, almost invariably respond to them marvellously well." **In your own life, what effect has the thrusting of responsibilities on to you had upon your attitude, behaviour and development?**
- g. "I could have bitten off my tongue." Often, particularly after some embarrassing situation, we wish we could go back half an hour and try things again. **Think of such an episode in your own life, recall the events which led up to it, and try to convey exactly how you felt at the time. Indicate how much you learned from the experience, and how your behavior in the future may well be affected by what you learned.** (You may, if you wish, treat this topic humorously.)
- h. Young people often feel that although in theory they may have a great deal of freedom of choice, in fact there are many constraints upon their exercising of this freedom - perhaps concerning the clothes they wear, the leisure pursuits they follow, their school career, their employment prospects, or in many other areas of their lives. **What constraints, limiting factors, are there upon your exercising your freedom of choice?**

- i. We all have moments when confidence cracks. **Write about such a moment, or moments, in your life, bringing out the feelings which you experienced at the time and, also, the lessons you learned.**
- j. Sometimes in a friendship one person can become over-dependent upon the other. If you have, or have had, such a friendship, write about the experience and what you learned from it. **What part has the influence of other people played in the development of your character? Write under the title of 'Rejection'.**
- k. "I'm a _____ and proud of it!" What can you fill into the blank space which applies to you? **Write about your heritage or your convictions, explaining and justifying them.**
- l. Many young people like the stability of the familiar and dread the prospect of change, while others look forward excitedly to new situations.

EITHER

Write about your attitude to change e.g. how you think you will cope when you have to leave school.

OR

If you have experienced some fairly major change in your life, write about your reactions to it. Do not merely narrate events.

- m. "Believe me, happiness is shy, And comes not aye when sought, man!"(Burns) Happiness is very rarely found when you go out to seek it. It comes in other ways. Has this, or has this not, been the case in your own experience? **Write an essay in which you describe your feelings on this.**
- n. "One of the major issues of this year is Fear - public fear and private fear." **Explore a fear which troubles you.**
- o. "You criticise and you flatter
You imitate the best
And the rest you memorise
You know the time you impress me most
Are the times when you don't try
When you don't even try." (Joni Mitchell)

Do you find it easy to be yourself in your relationships with others, or do you act out a part by imitating someone else or generally trying to impress or even by being rebellious and deliberately awkward? **Take some or all of these questions into account in writing about yourself and your relationships.**

- p. "See Naples and die." This well-known saying expresses a deep longing to see a far off place. Is there any place which you long to visit? **Explain how this longing arose and try to convey the kind of satisfaction you might gain by fulfilling your desire.**
- q. Adolescence - Is it necessarily an unpleasant experience? **Write about the troubles which sometimes make adolescents unhappy. Then describe some of the pleasures and satisfactions which belong particularly to that time of life.** Make sure that your essay has a suitable conclusion.