



General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Examination
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General Studies (Specification A)

GENA1

Unit 1 AS Culture and Society

Source Booklet

Source for use with **Questions 1.1 to 1.30** and **Questions 2 to 5**.

Section A

Source for Questions 1.1 to 1.30

Who needs the ICA?

- (1) Somehow it seems symptomatic of the inconsequential backwater that the Institute of Contemporary Arts has become. More than a year after the relevant date has passed, an exhibition called *Nought to Sixty*, the major component of its sixtieth birthday celebrations, is only now open.
- (2) It was early in 1947 that the Institute of Contemporary Arts was set up, by a group of Modernists who wanted a “new consciousness” of the arts to evolve in exhausted post-war Britain. In June that year the ICA’s prime founder, an anarchist poet called Herbert Read, wrote a letter to the *The Times* appealing for funds. That produced a scathing riposte from the 91-year-old George Bernard Shaw. If we wanted to improve the well-being of British people, he thundered, the money would be better spent on hygiene, not the arts. Shaw had a point with London still full of bomb craters and primitive Victorian housing. And there are those who would argue that the ICA has done little in the last 61 years to prove him wrong.
- (3) I wouldn’t quite go along with that. It’s probably impossible for anyone under 50 to imagine how stuffy the mainstream arts scene was, even in the 1960s. The counter-culture, the beatnik movement, hippies, sex, drugs and rock’n’roll – these were things that happened elsewhere. They had virtually no impact on theatres, concert halls or galleries. The ICA in those days was a unique melting pot for the avant-gardes of different fields, from Peter Blake’s Pop Art to John Cage’s music. It was also a thorn in the complacent backside of the Establishment. Shows such as the 1965 happening *Oh What A Lovely Whore*, which invited the audience to smash up a piano, or the 1957 exhibition *Paintings by Chimpanzees* (which was exactly that) or Mary Kelly’s notorious 1976 display of dirty nappies (to bring home the reality of motherhood) or Neubauten’s never-to-be-forgotten Concerto for Voice and Machinery, which demolished the ICA’s stage with a piledriver – all these shook preconceptions about art. One show was shut down amid threats of indecency charges.
- (4) But all that was more than 25 years ago. Since then? Well, there have been odd attempts to recapture the spirit of daring anarchy. Looking back over my reviews in the 1980s and 1990s, I see I wrote about a series of workshops on transvestitism with “New York’s foremost cross-dressing impresario”, about a display of cat food balanced on melons, and about “the first international festival of naked poets”. None of which has left the slightest trace on my memory. That was how much impact they made on me, and on the public at large.
- (5) Little wonder, then, that the ICA has gone off the radar in the past 20 years. Apart from one incident, that is. Six years ago its chairman, a businessman called Ivan Massow, was forced to resign when he made the observation that most conceptual art was “pretentious, self-indulgent, craftless tat”. The ICA was in the headlines for the first time in years only because its boss had attacked the very thing that it was supposed to be promoting.
- (6) In one way, however, Massow’s words were unsurprising, since the ICA had spectacularly failed to jump on the Young British Artists bandwagon that galvanised the London art scene in the 1980s and 1990s. Charles Saatchi and Tate Modern were allowed to set the agendas, garner the headlines and draw the big crowds. How sad that for the first time in history, Britain was the centre of an avant-garde art movement yet the very institution that was set up to champion the avant-garde was nowhere to be seen.

- (7) What has the ICA been doing instead, while millions flocked to Nicholas Serota's great brick culture castle by the Thames? Well, it's been offering what its music programmer calls "hot, drink-fuelled nights of music, butt shaking and smiles". Admittedly, these club nights have boosted its attendance figures but should you need a £1.36 million annual subsidy from the Arts Council to do that? London heaves with clubs offering buttshaking to suit every taste.
- (8) The ICA has also made a point of championing the 'digital arts' – a subculture of a subculture that already seems as dated as a prawn cocktail. And it is reliving its past. The Concerto for Voice and Machine was revived recently – though with a fake floor so that the building wouldn't suffer any real damage. How symbolic! The ICA is "not about storming the barricades any more", says Ekow Eshun, the former style journalist who was appointed its boss three years ago. So what is it about?
- (9) Perhaps it is about identifying the artists who are going to be big in the 2020s, rather than those – such as Hirst and Emin – who peaked in the early 1990s. If so *Nought to Sixty* looks promising. It presents 60 solo projects by young British and Irish artists. Each show lasts just one week. And the future line-up looks suitably weird and wacky. Nina Canell and Robin Watkins, for instance, will be showing a film of a man digging a hole in a bog. And there's an exhibition by Alastair MacKinven, a young artist last seen glueing his hand to the floor of the Camden Arts Centre to test how long it would take the attendants to notice. According to the ICA's programme, this prank "plays with notions of institutional critique".
- (10) Perhaps these youthful japes will be enough to revive its wild, iconoclastic spirit. But stuck in its posh home on The Mall, just beneath the Athenaeum Club and the Institute of Directors, the ICA seems marooned both geographically and symbolically. In London today contemporary arts flourish. Even pillars of the cultural establishment, such as the Royal Opera House and the National Theatre, offer cutting edge new work. If the ICA were to become more like the National Theatre of Scotland, to become not a physical venue but a commissioning body, it might still survive with its point intact. Yet in its current form it is almost the last place you would look for brilliant new work.
- (11) People who work in institutes are, by definition, institutionalised. And that's the last thing the avant-garde should be. When the Edinburgh Festival reached its 50th birthday, the great George Steiner declared that the best way of celebrating the anniversary would be for it to abolish itself – before what was spontaneous and exhilarating became routine. I am tempted to offer the ICA the same advice. If the ICA blew itself up tomorrow, what an anarchic statement that would be! Except that I don't think many people would even notice that it had gone.

Source continues overleaf

Some milestones at the ICA

Peter Blake: Objects, 1960 – One of his first solo shows, this exhibition is credited with launching Pop Art to the wider public. In the early 1960s the ICA mounted exhibitions by several of Britain's top artists including Howard Hodgkin and David Hockney.

The Clash, 1976 – One of the band's earliest gigs, it inaugurated punk.

Prostitution, 1976 – the ICA was threatened with indecency charges and forced to remove what were deemed to be pornographic images including its star exhibit, a semi-naked woman.

Manga! Manga! Manga! 1992 – one of the first showings in the UK of anim . Introduced Japanese animation to London – still carries a huge following at the ICA's annual Comica festival.

Source: adapted from RICHARD MORRISON, *The Times*, 29 April 2008
  The Times 04/2008

Section B**Sources for Questions 2 to 5**

Source B

One of the greatest weaknesses of the present electoral system is its number of safe seats. In only about one in six constituencies does the individual voter's decision have much chance of influencing the outcome. There are too many safe seats. It is no wonder, in these circumstances, that the overall turn-out of an electorate, already disillusioned by broken election promises and distracted by busy lifestyles, is so often disappointing. It is appreciably lower than in continental Europe whose voting systems allow people to believe that their votes count.

Voter apathy in Britain may have many causes – including this time around, no doubt, disenchantment with Parliament over MPs' expenses. But one reason is surely the feeling of many voters in safe seats that it will make no difference whether they vote or not.

The current arrangement, of course, suits both main parties, each with their quota of safe seats. The Liberal Democrats and much smaller parties are the losers, with a parliamentary representation that nowhere near reflects their share of the total votes cast. No wonder their supporters feel cheated and call for radical electoral reform.

Source: Adapted from Leading article, 'Safe seats blight our democracy.'
The Independent, 30 December, 2009

Source C

In August 2007, Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, was asked by the prime minister to review British citizenship. This was against a background of growing concern about a lack of social cohesion in British society, the alienation and radicalisation of elements of ethnic minority communities and their possible impact on national security. In addition, the growth of anti-social behaviour and the breakdown and isolation of some local communities, especially in poorer areas, was also included.

His report aims to promote a greater sense of community and tackle a decline in national pride. Proposals include a new British national day beginning in 2012 to coincide with the London Olympics or the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, an honours list for "ordinary citizens", and updating the national anthem. Such measures, according to Lord Goldsmith, would "entrench the notion of Britishness in British society."

Other proposals could be seen as more down to earth and, perhaps, more attractive in promoting communal solidarity. These could include a type of community service as part of "citizen education" in schools and council tax discounts in return for volunteer work such as recycling or helping with literacy schemes. Further incentives listed in the report include a reduction in university fees for students who take part in civic activities and loans for new immigrants to pay for language lessons.

His report also proposes sweeping changes to current categories of citizenship which would promote social inclusion: foreigners working in this country but not applying for a British passport could become "associate citizens" while those who were applying for citizenship and working in key jobs, such as in the NHS, could have their applications fast-tracked.

In welcoming the report, Gordon Brown looked forward to a "lively debate" on citizenship.

Source: Adapted from ROSALIND RYAN, 'Goldsmith unveils proposals to strengthen citizenship'
The Guardian, 11 March, 2008
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Source D

To help schoolchildren feel British, a government report suggests that, after completing their education which would include lessons in citizenship, school-leavers attend a formal citizenship ceremony and swear an oath of allegiance. There is, of course, nothing wrong with the latter which is made, among others, by judges and military personnel.

But there is something deeply wrong here – another symptom of the government realising that there is a crisis of national identity in Britain. Britain is a compound nation, a comparatively recent amalgamation of three very close peoples – English, Scottish and Welsh – with overlapping, but sometimes competing, identities. Also we are not a country with a founding event to be celebrated like a revolution or war of independence. Mass migration and the doctrine of multiculturalism have combined in Britain, as elsewhere, to create a whole range of British identities. As citizens we have a range of loyalties, not least to ourselves – in this age of individualism our individual rights often transcend collective rights and, with them, our sense of civic responsibility.

The rise of the European Union, globalisation and internationalism have weakened the notion of a sovereign national state. With most of our laws made in the Belgian capital, our interest rates dependent on a central bank in Frankfurt and our armed forces only operating as part of an international coalition, patriotism towards a single country would appear increasingly out-dated and narrow.

Can Britishness really be taught and should we be trying?

Source: Adapted from ANTHONY BROWNE,
'Yes, there's a crisis in our national identity but an oath of allegiance won't change that.'
The Daily Mail, 11 March, 2008

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