



Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

Paper 2 Critical Thinking

9694/21

May/June 2026

1 hour 45 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [].

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Section A

Study the evidence and then answer Questions 1 and 2.

Source A

Article in general interest magazine (special issue on 'Boredom')

Boredom is the experience of wanting to engage in satisfying activity but being unable to do so. Symptoms may include lack of interest in activities, difficulty in remaining motivated and lack of a sense of excitement. People who are bored tend to feel tired, but paradoxically are unable to rest or relax. Multiple research projects have found that people who are chronically bored tend to be aggressive and impulsive. People who have committed various crimes, including computer fraud, rioting and murder, have said they offended because they were bored.

Source B

Another article in same special issue of magazine

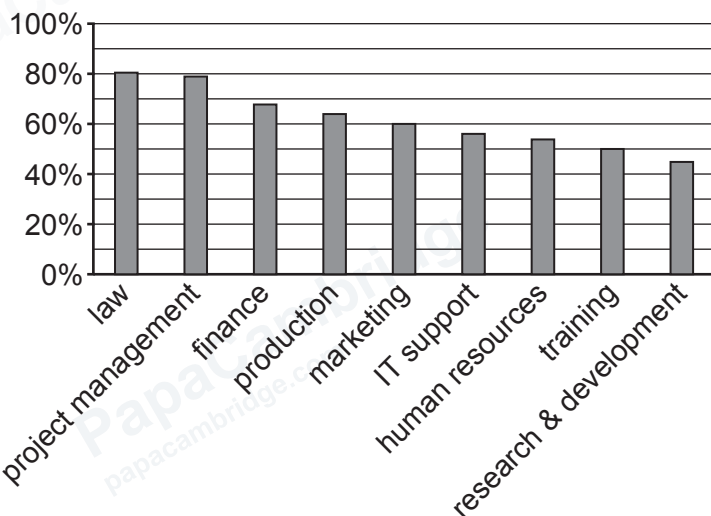
Boredom frees the mind to be creative. Many people find their best ideas come while they are performing boring tasks, such as shaving or driving to work. Boredom also benefits the economy. A psychologist specialising in the study of boredom has stated, 'People eat chocolate when they are bored at work... the extent to which boredom is propping up the confectionery industry is staggering!' The leisure industry and much online retail would not be needed if people were not bored.

Source C

News report

Most lawyers are bored at work

Many people are bored at work, according to a survey conducted by a recruitment agency amongst their clients looking for new jobs. The results of the survey are shown in this bar chart. A staggering 80% of lawyers identified boredom as their reason for seeking a move.



Source D

Paediatrician's blog

Children today have far more activities and resources to stimulate, inform and entertain them than we did when we were their age, and yet they constantly complain of being bored. The more stimulation parents and carers give children, the more they expect. They do not learn how to entertain themselves or how to tolerate low-stimulating environments. Adults should stop thinking of boredom as a bad thing for children. As a paediatrician and mother, I have observed that boredom provides opportunities for children to learn and to develop, by exercising creativity, communicating with others and negotiating conflict.

Source E

Self-help website

The first step in overcoming boredom is to work out why you feel bored. If a particular activity fails to engage or reward you, then explore how to engage in more valuable experiences in the future. Don't waste 'dead time', but use it as an opportunity to practise meditation techniques or to 'count your blessings', thanking God or the universe for the aspects of your life for which you feel grateful.

Teenagers have discovered something which parents and teachers find hard to believe but is true. Listening to music is not a distraction, but an aid to concentration when performing potentially boring tasks, such as studying. Similarly, many people report that engaging in another activity, such as doodling or knitting, alongside a potentially boring task helps them to concentrate.

Another valuable technique for dealing with boredom is to reward yourself for making progress. Such rewards do not necessarily have to be the obvious ones, such as coffee or snacks. For example, promise yourself, 'When I have written another 100 words, I will check my social media', or even, 'When I have read another five pages, I will take out the trash.'

- 1 (a) Is Source D an argument? Justify your answer. [2]
- (b) How reliably can it be concluded from Source A that being bored causes anti-social behaviour? [3]
- (c) Assess the reliability of Source D. [3]
- (d) Identify and explain **two** weaknesses in the support given by Source C to its claim that 'Most lawyers are bored at work.' [4]
- (e) 'In order to appreciate music properly, it is necessary to give your full attention to it.'
- How effectively does this claim counter the advice in Source E to play music while studying? [2]

- 2 You are advised to spend some time planning your answer before you begin to write it.

'Being bored is not necessarily bad for people.'

To what extent do you agree with this claim?

Write a reasoned explanation to support your opinion.

Your answer should use and evaluate evidence from the sources provided.

[8]

Section B

Read the following passage and then answer Questions 3, 4 and 5.

- 1 Until recently, it was impossible in many languages and cultures to address a woman without mentioning whether she was married or unmarried. The replacement of the titles 'Mrs' and 'Miss' by 'Ms' was an important step towards achieving equality for women. Abolishing titles completely would be the obvious next step towards equality, because there are many good reasons why someone might not wish everyone who addresses them to have to mention their gender.
- 2 Inherited titles, such as 'Lord' or 'Duchess', originate from many centuries ago, when nearly all of a nation's resources were owned by a few wealthy families. Almost everyone now believes that it is acceptable for people to become rich through their own efforts, and possibly even the efforts of their parents or grandparents, but no one should be rich simply because a remote ancestor was rich. So all inherited titles should now be removed.
- 3 Some people who have political or professional titles such as 'Councilman' or 'Her Honour' like to use those titles in private life as well as at work. A psychiatrist whose patients include many powerful people says that using such titles in private life is evidence of harmful psychological insecurity. Since there are some situations in which you should certainly not use these titles, they should not be used at all.
- 4 All personal titles should be abolished. College students in some countries now address teachers by their first names instead of using titles. This has been a good development, because it reminds both students and teachers to treat one another as persons. The benefits of this change in behaviour are shown by the increase in the number of high-class degrees awarded in those countries since it took place.
- 5 It may seem obvious that one should ask other people how they would prefer to be addressed, but that can put them in an awkward position. Someone may not want a casual acquaintance to use their first name, but asking to be called 'Mr So-and-so' or 'Ms Such-and-such' would make them look pompous and obsessed by their own importance. In fact, the only people who support the continued use of titles are those who think they are better than others and want their superiority to be acknowledged every time they are addressed or mentioned.

- 3 (a) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify the **main conclusion**. [2]
- (b) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify **two intermediate conclusions** from paragraphs 1 to 3. [4]

- (c) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify **one counter-assertion**. [2]

- (d) The passage contains this piece of reasoning:

Abolishing titles completely would be the obvious next step towards equality, because there are many good reasons why someone might not wish everyone who addresses them to have to mention their gender.

This piece of reasoning relies on assumptions which are **not** stated in the passage. Identify **one** of these **unstated assumptions**. [2]

- 4 (a) Identify and explain a flaw of **conflation** in paragraph 2. [2]

- (b) Identify and evaluate an **appeal** in paragraph 3. [2]

- (c) Identify and explain **one** flaw or weakness in the reasoning in paragraph 3. [2]

- (d) Identify and explain a **causal (cum hoc) flaw** in paragraph 4. [2]

- (e) Identify and explain **one** flaw or weakness in the reasoning in paragraph 5. [2]

- 5 You are advised to spend some time planning your answer before you begin to write it.

‘All human beings should be treated as equal to one another.’

Write your own short argument to support **or** challenge this claim.

Your argument should have a clear structure and make use of various argument elements.

The conclusion of your argument must be stated.

Credit will **not** be given for repeating ideas from the passage. [8]

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