

Eiken P1 Speaking Exercise 2011-1

1. Agree or disagree: The sciences are more important than the arts in today's society.

I believe that the sciences are essential a modern society's wellbeing and that they are more important than the arts. There are three reasons why I believe this. First, the economy of modern nations depends on scientific innovation. Most businesses rely on scientific advances for their successes, from those involved in high technology fields to those involved in agriculture, medicine and other fields. If an advanced nation's scientific research and innovation fall behind that of other nations, its economy would be seriously harmed. This would lead to a fall in living standards and a rise in unemployment. Second, all aspects of our daily lives are effected by scientific advancements. Third, the sciences allow us to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Breakthroughs in medicine, psychology and other fields help us prevent illness as well as cure various disorders and injuries. Science plays an important role in our total wellbeing. For these reasons, it is no surprise that nations invest so much in scientific education and research. Life today would be complete different without the sciences.

2. Can violence ever be justified in support of a political cause?

Violence can rarely be justified in support of a political cause, especially in democratic countries, where people are given the power of free speech and the right to vote. In modern societies, there are laws to protect people from violence as well as laws against encouraging people to commit violence. These laws have to be respected. Some militant activists today use violence or the threat of violence to promote their political causes. We hear and see many accounts of terrorism, wars and other forms of violence in the media, making us depressed and fearful. We should do our best to stay informed about political issues, understand opposing views and stand up for our political beliefs in nonviolent, responsible ways. However, violence in the form of a revolution may be justified in cases where the government is a dictatorship, is oppressive and is itself committing violence against its people. But violent revolutions often result in new dictatorships and new oppression, so the results of such violence are often unsatisfactory. That's why it's important to avoid political violence whenever possible.

3. Is it acceptable to treat water as a private commodity?

I believe that it is acceptable to treat water as a private commodity, but only in normal circumstances. Let me explain. Ordinarily, everyone should have a right to purchase necessary commodities like water and to use them as they need. In a free market, prices for commodities go up and down according to supply and demand. This is how value is determined. If there is a shortage of water, for example, water prices will rise, causing consumers to use it more carefully. In this respect, the free market acts as a natural system to regulate water usage. However, there are special times and places where water usage needs to be controlled by the government. For example, there are large areas of Australia where water shortages are common. Water there must be rationed to make sure that everyone has a reasonable

access to it. Businesses that depend on water, such as farms, must also be protected to assure that they receive enough water. With global warming, water shortages will likely increase, so government may have to take more control in the years ahead. Nations that share water resources, such as lakes and rivers, have to negotiate how to share those resources in a fair way. Therefore, water should be treated as either a private or a public commodity depending on circumstances.

4. Should people be encouraged to buy more domestically produced goods?

I believe that people should be encouraged to buy domestically produced goods whenever possible. There are four reasons why I believe this is important. First, buying domestically produced goods supports the national economy and creates jobs. The stronger the economy becomes, the more money people have to make future purchases. Second, making domestic purchases helps protect the environment. Goods produced overseas have to be shipped long distances, requiring higher usage of energy, such as gas and oil. This results in more pollution and higher release of carbon emissions, a cause of global warming. Third, a nation is more secure when it produces its own products. For example, Japan now depends on foreign nations for much of its food. If a worldwide crisis was to happen and we were not able to obtain necessary food, the results would be serious or even dangerous for all Japanese people. Finally, for things like food, domestically produced goods are often healthier. Domestic standards are higher and locally grown food is fresher and has fewer preservatives than food shipped long distances. For these reasons, I believe it is a good thing to encourage purchases of domestically produced goods.

5. Is too much pressure put on children to conform to traditional gender roles?

I do not believe that children are overly pressured to conform to traditional gender roles. There are three reasons why I believe this is true. First, studies show that boys and girls naturally act differently and are interested in different things. For example, little boys like to play with things like toy trucks and little girls like dolls. These differences do not have to be encouraged. Second, these gender differences train children for future roles. For example, only women can have babies, and women are generally more interested than men in staying home and taking care of infants. Therefore, the natural instinct of little girls to play with dolls or play house is good practice for them. Third, children who are not encouraged to conform to gender roles may experience problems in real life. They may be exposed to teasing and bullying in schools. There are stories in the news, for example, about little boys who want to wear a dress to school or act in a feminine way. This causes them confusion and hurt. Finally, I believe that society has already become much less rigid today about gender roles than past generations. Therefore, I believe that children do not suffer from conforming to traditional gender roles as they are defined today.