

Enhancing Senior Secondary Students' Reading and Writing Skills through Connecting the Learning Experiences in English Language and Liberal Studies

Resource Materials

This set of resource materials, which has been trialled at Secondary 4 in a secondary school, focuses on helping students make connections between the learning experiences in English and Liberal Studies. It covers a series of reading activities which provide opportunities for students to synthesise, interpret, and evaluate information and ideas presented in a range of texts and enhance their understanding of the salient features of argumentative writing. Drawing on the reading materials, students are required to produce an argumentative essay with convincing points of view, an appropriate structure, and a range of linguistic devices to achieve the desired purposes.

This set of materials consists of a unit of tasks on “Sustainable Housing for the 21st Century” with both the Student’s Copy and Teacher’s Copy. The Student’s Copy includes handouts and worksheets for students, while the Teacher’s Copy provides learning objectives, teacher’s notes as well as the suggested answers for teachers’ reference.

Situation

Young Power, a youth service group which encourages young people to participate in out-of-school activities and promotes their all-round development, organises an essay competition related to the theme “Sustainable Housing for the 21st Century”. The three winners of the competition will receive a full scholarship to participate in international youth exchange camps.

You and your classmates are interested in joining the competition. You will work together in preparation for the competition under the guidance of your English teacher, Ms Wong, and each of you will submit an entry for the competition.

Task 1 Understanding the Housing Issues in Hong Kong

You will identify the housing issues in Hong Kong based on the information collected. You will also discuss possible solutions to the problems identified.

Task 2 Exploring the Issues of Country Park Conservation and Residential Development

You will read a fact sheet and letters to the editor to identify arguments for and against utilising country park areas in residential development, and present your own views on the issue.

Task 3 Examining an Argumentative Essay

In preparation for your own essay, you will study a winning essay of the essay writing competition last year and analyse its language features and structure.

Task 4 Writing an Essay for the Competition

You will write an essay FOR or AGAINST the topic “Developing country parks into residential areas does more good than harm to Hong Kong”.

Task 1 Understanding the Housing Issues in Hong Kong

You will identify the housing issues in Hong Kong based on the information collected. You will also discuss possible solutions to the problems identified.

Part A: Synthesising ideas across texts

Learning objectives:

To enable students to

- understand and interpret information presented in a range of texts, including charts and photo captions
- organise and integrate information and ideas to support arguments

Text 1 – An excerpt from an interview with a property analyst

Q: How would you describe the trend of property prices in the past few years in Hong Kong?

A: According to the government statistics released in January, property prices have risen relentlessly for four years and are still rising, though at a slower pace now. Property prices rose by only 4.28% last year, which was in stark contrast to the marked increase of 18.92% in the year before last.

Q: Some people anticipate that private home prices will fluctuate dramatically for some time next year. What do you think?

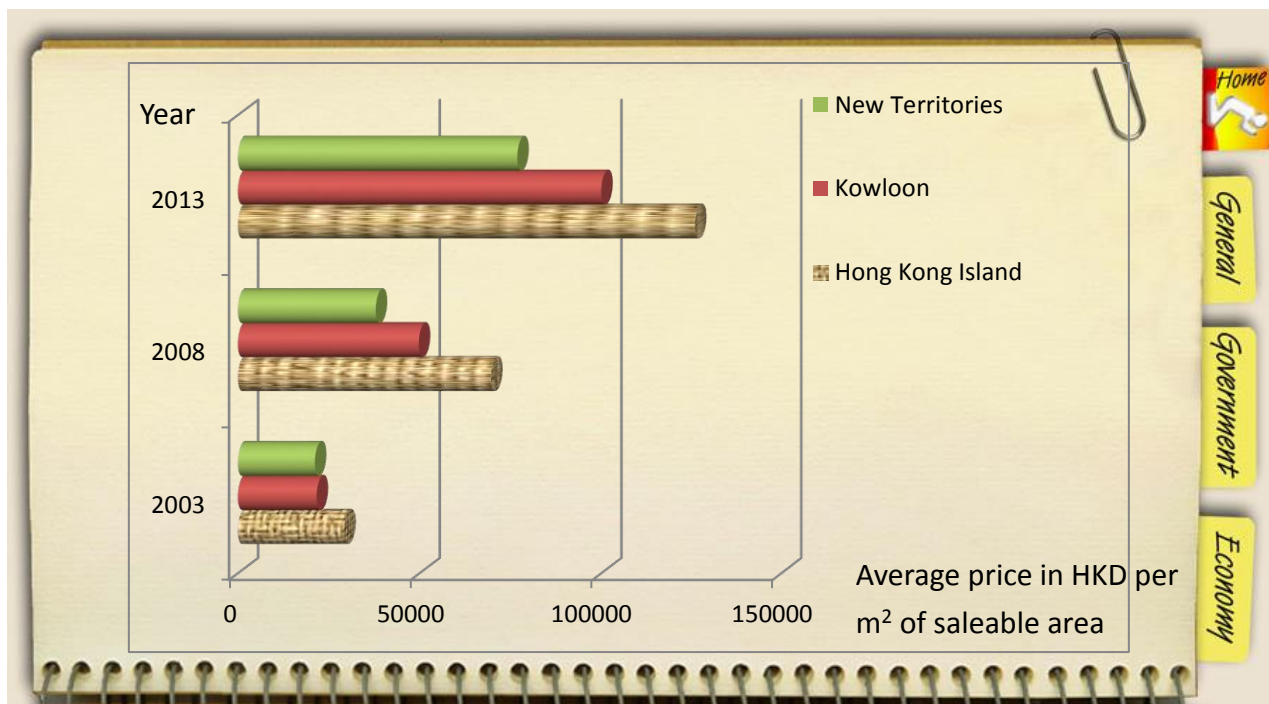
A: Some analysts forecast property prices to go up slightly in the next quarter but fall quite significantly next year. However, I expect Hong Kong home prices to pick up progressively this year and reach a peak in the coming two years due to the huge demand for housing.

Teacher's notes

- ✧ Go through Texts 1 & 2 with students and help students develop relevant reading skills through questioning. Leave Texts 3-5 for independent reading.
- ✧ Have students skim *Text 1*. Guide them to identify the key words and main ideas presented.
 - *Read the two questions. What information do you think Text 1 presents? (property prices, private home prices)*
 - *What housing problem does Text 1 reveal? (The continuous rise in the prices of private housing, which have been increasingly unaffordable for people)*
- ✧ Have students summarise what the property analyst suggests in one sentence.

e.g. What does the analyst say about the future trends in the property market? (The analyst expects property prices to rise continuously in the years ahead.)

Text 2 – Government statistics

Prices of private flats in different regions

(Adapted from <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/common/pdf/about-us/publications-and-statistics/HIF.pdf>)

Teacher's notes

✧ Provide scaffolds for students to process *Text 2* step by step.

➤ Step 1: Previewing the chart

What type of chart is it? (A bar chart)

What does the title tell you about the information presented in the chart? (It is about the price of private housing.)

What do the intervals on the x-axis and y-axis (or the horizontal and vertical axes) refer to? (The x-axis indicates the prices in Hong Kong dollars and the y-axis shows the years.)

Which regions do the three bars refer to? (The three bars refer to the New Territories, Kowloon and Hong Kong Island.)

➤ Step 2: Reading the data

Can you describe the property prices in 2003, 2008 and 2013?

(In 2003, the prices of private housing in all parts of Hong Kong were around HKD\$20000 per sq m of saleable area. In 2008, the prices ranged from HKD\$40000 to HKD\$70000 per sq m of saleable area. In 2013, the prices ranged from HKD\$80000 to HKD\$120000 per sq m of saleable area.)

➤ Step 3: Reading between the data

Can you observe any trends in the chart? (The prices were on the rise from 2003 to 2013. The prices nearly doubled every 5 years. The increase was considered significant.)

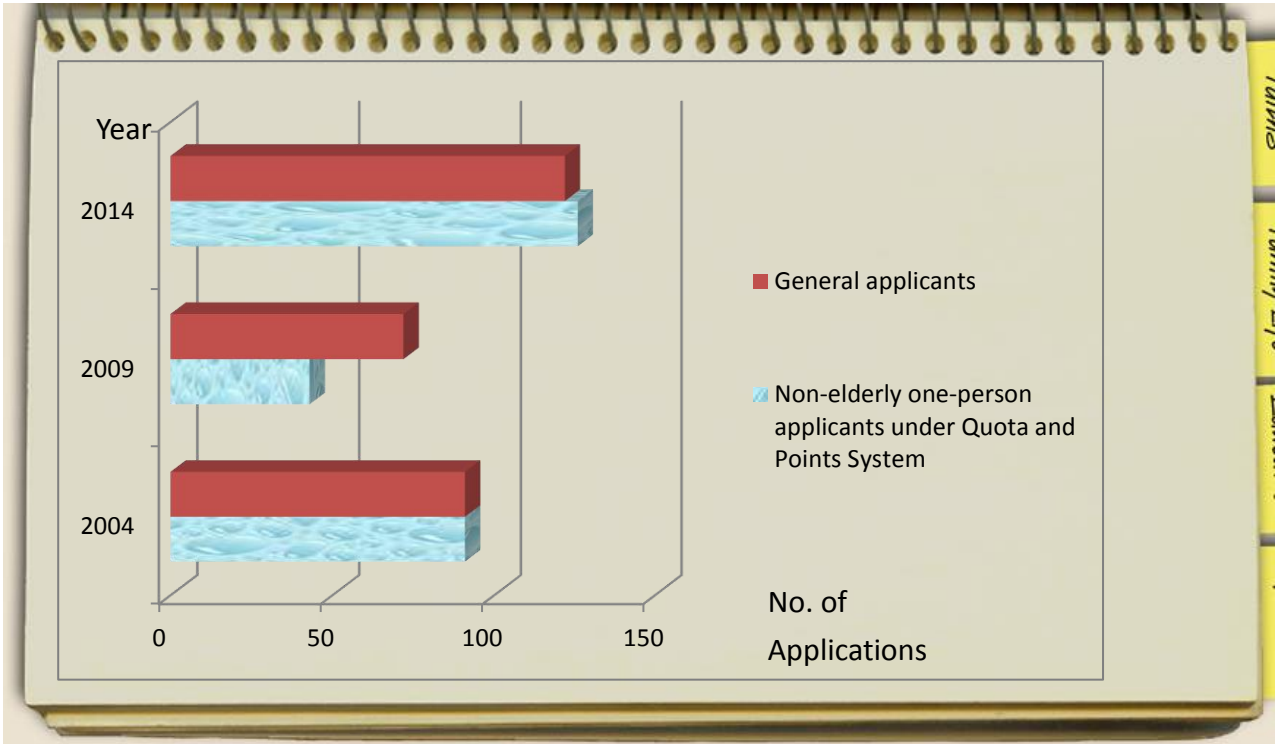
➤ Step 4: Reading beyond the data

What conclusion can you draw from the data in the chart? Does it point to a wider problem in society?

(The soaring prices of private housing might have become unaffordable for some Hong Kong citizens. This might fuel social discontent about the huge cost of living in the city.)

Text 3 – Government statistics

Number of applications for public rental housing



**Numbers in thousands*

**The average wait time for general applicants in 2014 was 3 years.*

(Adapted from <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/common/pdf/about-us/publications-and-statistics/HIF.pdf>)

Text 4 – An excerpt from a research report

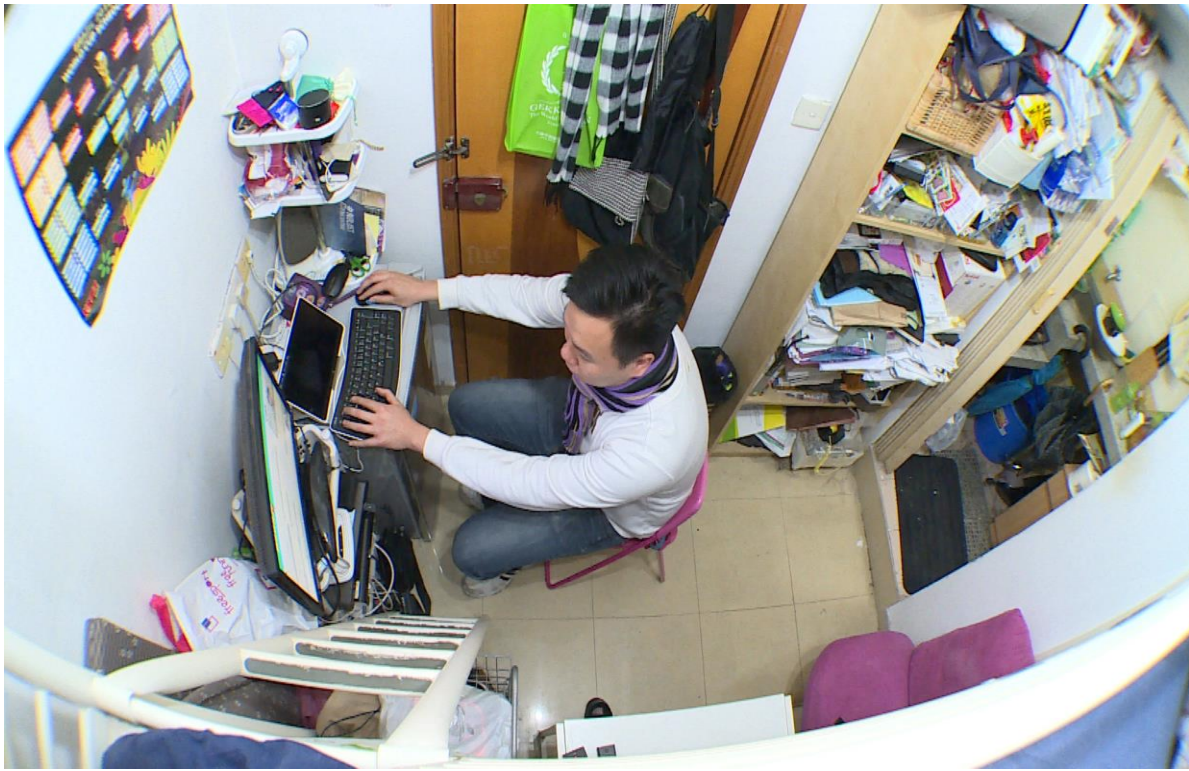
Low-income families are the biggest victims of the persistent rent hikes in Hong Kong. Yet the recently announced Policy Address and Budget Speech show no sign of stepping up welfare provision for this group of people. Undertaken by Oxfam Hong Kong, a survey titled “The Living Conditions of Tenant Households Who Have Been on the Waiting List for Public Rental Housing for Over 3 Years” found that over 70% of poor, non-CSSA (Comprehensive Social Security Assistance) tenant households (the so-called “N have-nots”) had not received any offer of public rental housing even after waiting for over four years.

The survey, which covered 501 families, revealed that 73.7% of the respondents had yet to receive the first offer of public rental flats even after waiting for 4.4 years on average. Of these cases, over 76% had not gone through the vetting process. Almost 78% of those who received the first offer had waited longer than three years.

Concerning the living conditions of the respondents who were in the queue for public rental housing, over 80% of them resided in expensive, small-sized rental flats, commonly known as subdivided flats, in urban areas. Despite paying high rent, the living density per person was fairly high. According to the survey, 68.3% of the respondents lived in cubicles, bedspaces or subdivided flats. The median living space per person was about 4.2 square metres (or 45 square feet), far below the minimum living space standard of 5.5 square metres per person set by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. About 61.8% of the surveyed households lived in overcrowded conditions.

(Adapted from http://www.oxfam.org.hk/filemgr/2040/OHKstandpointsonhousing_editedeng_final.pdf)

Text 5 – A photo caption



A more affordable choice for the younger generation – a subdivided flat with limited space for work and rest

From RTHK

(Source: <http://programme.rthk.org.hk/rthk/tv/programme.php?name=tv/hkcc&p=858&pid=109439&m=photo&e=292515>)

1. In groups of four, identify the housing issues and supporting details presented in *Texts 1-5*.

Texts	Housing Issues	Supporting Details
1-2	<p><i>The soaring prices of private housing have become unaffordable for most Hong Kong citizens.</i></p>	<p>a) <i>According to government statistics, the prices of private housing in all parts of Hong Kong increased dramatically from 2003 to 2013.</i></p> <p>b) <i>A property analyst has also observed a continuous growth in property prices over the past four years.</i></p>
3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The demand for public housing is on the rise and the wait time for it is excessively long.</i> • <i>The small/limited living space for citizens lowers their quality of life.</i> • <i>The quality of life for the people living in subdivided units is unacceptable.</i> 	<p>a) <i>A survey revealed that almost three-quarters of the respondents had been in the queue for public rental housing for over four years.</i></p> <p>b) <i>Overall, the statistics showed an increase in the number of applications for public rental housing from 2004 to 2014, despite a considerable drop from 2004 to 2009.</i></p> <p>c) <i>The median living space per person in the surveyed families was below the minimum living space standard by 1.3 square metres.</i></p> <p>d) <i>The photo shows a subdivided unit which provides barely enough space for the man to work and rest.</i></p>

2. In **groups of four**, discuss some possible solutions to the above issues.

Possible Solutions

Examples:

- *increase land supply for housing by developing rural areas and redeveloping urban areas, reclamation, creating man-made islands and building underground homes*
- *implement effective strategies for town planning to rezone and source developable land for housing*
- *provide subsidy for first-time homebuyers*

Teacher's notes

Allow five minutes for students to discuss in groups some possible solutions to the housing issues. Have students present their solutions to the class. Provide feedback on creativity, feasibility of the solutions and use of language.

Part B: Describing trends and changes

Learning objectives:

To enable students to

- use appropriate vocabulary and language patterns to present trends which lend support to arguments in speaking and writing
- understand the varying degrees of change conveyed by a range of expressions
- respond to data presented in graphic forms, which is a typical skill required in Liberal Studies

- Underline the expressions for describing trends and changes in the following sentences. Discuss the different parts of speech of such expressions.
 - Some people anticipate that private home prices will fluctuate dramatically for some time next year.
 - Some analysts forecast property prices to go up slightly in the next quarter but fall quite significantly next year. However, I expect Hong Kong home prices to pick up progressively this year and reach a peak in the coming two years due to the huge demand for housing.
 - According to the government statistics released in January, property prices have risen relentlessly for four years and are still rising, though at a slower pace now. Property prices rose by only 4.28% last year, which was in stark contrast to the marked increase of 18.92% in the year before last.
- Categorise the expressions for describing trends and changes. Think of more examples for each category.

Upward Trend		Downward Trend		Steady Trend		Others	
<i>Verbs:</i>	<i>Nouns:</i>	<i>Verbs:</i>	<i>Nouns:</i>	<i>Verbs:</i>	<i>Nouns:</i>	<i>Verbs:</i>	<i>Nouns:</i>
• rise	• rise	• fall	• fall	• level off	• a	• fluctuate	• fluctuation
• jump	• increase	• dip	• dip	• remain	levelling		
• grow	• growth	• drop	• drop	the	off		
• climb		• decline	• decline	same			
• go up		• decrease	• decrease	• stabilise			
• increase		• go down	• plunge				
• double		• plunge					
• treble		• plummet					
• skyrocket							
• reach a peak							
• recover							
• improve							
• soar							

Describing the speed/extent of change	
e.g. Adverbs describing the speed of change: <i>relentlessly, sharply, quickly, rapidly, steeply, dramatically, considerably, significantly, noticeably, substantially, steadily, gradually, moderately, slightly, slowly</i>	e.g. Adjectives: <i>slight, sudden, rapid, dramatic, steep, sharp, great, gradual, slow, steady, marked, insignificant, noticeable</i>

Teacher's notes

- ✧ Explain that some of the words introduced can form a word cline (i.e. a string of words arranged in terms of strength or intensity). Some examples are as follows:
 - *slightly – moderately – dramatically*
 - *slow – gradual – sharp*
- ✧ Tell students that these words are useful in argumentative writing and the effective use of them can add force to an argument.

Task 2 Exploring the Issues of Country Park Conservation and Residential Development

You will read a fact sheet and letters to the editor to identify arguments for and against utilising country park areas in residential development, and present your own views on the issue.

Part A: Getting ready for a mini-debate**Learning objectives:**

To enable students to

- identify the audience of a text, and understand the stylistic variations between text types
- follow and evaluate the development of a point of view or argument in reading texts
- develop convincing and coherent arguments
- present counter-arguments and prepare rebuttals

1. To alleviate the housing problems in Hong Kong, it is proposed that part of Hong Kong's country parks be released to develop housing. **In pairs**, discuss your views on this proposal. Give reasons to support your stance.

2. The following are the excerpts of two texts. Study the excerpts and complete the table of comparison.

<p>The country parks and special areas, which cover 44,300 hectares, comprise scenic hills, woodlands, reservoirs and coastline in all parts of Hong Kong. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) manages the parks and is responsible for tree planting, plantation enhancement, conservation education, fire prevention and fighting, development control and provision of recreational and educational facilities. Over 11 million visitors were recorded in 2013 and most visitors engaged in hiking, leisure walking, fitness exercise, barbecuing, family picnics and camping.</p>	<p>It is simply ridiculous to pull down village houses, to which we indigenous male villagers are entitled, in order to ‘increase land supply’ and ‘ease the thorny issue of over-crowdedness’! How can people innocently assume that many of our villagers have become urban dwellers who are not attached to our ancestral culture and heritage? This is definitely not true.</p> <p>Alternatively, slicing a small portion of country parks to speed up urban development would probably cause minute impact on the environment and literally no dispute over land ownership. The country parks belong to all of us!</p> <p>Sai Kung</p>
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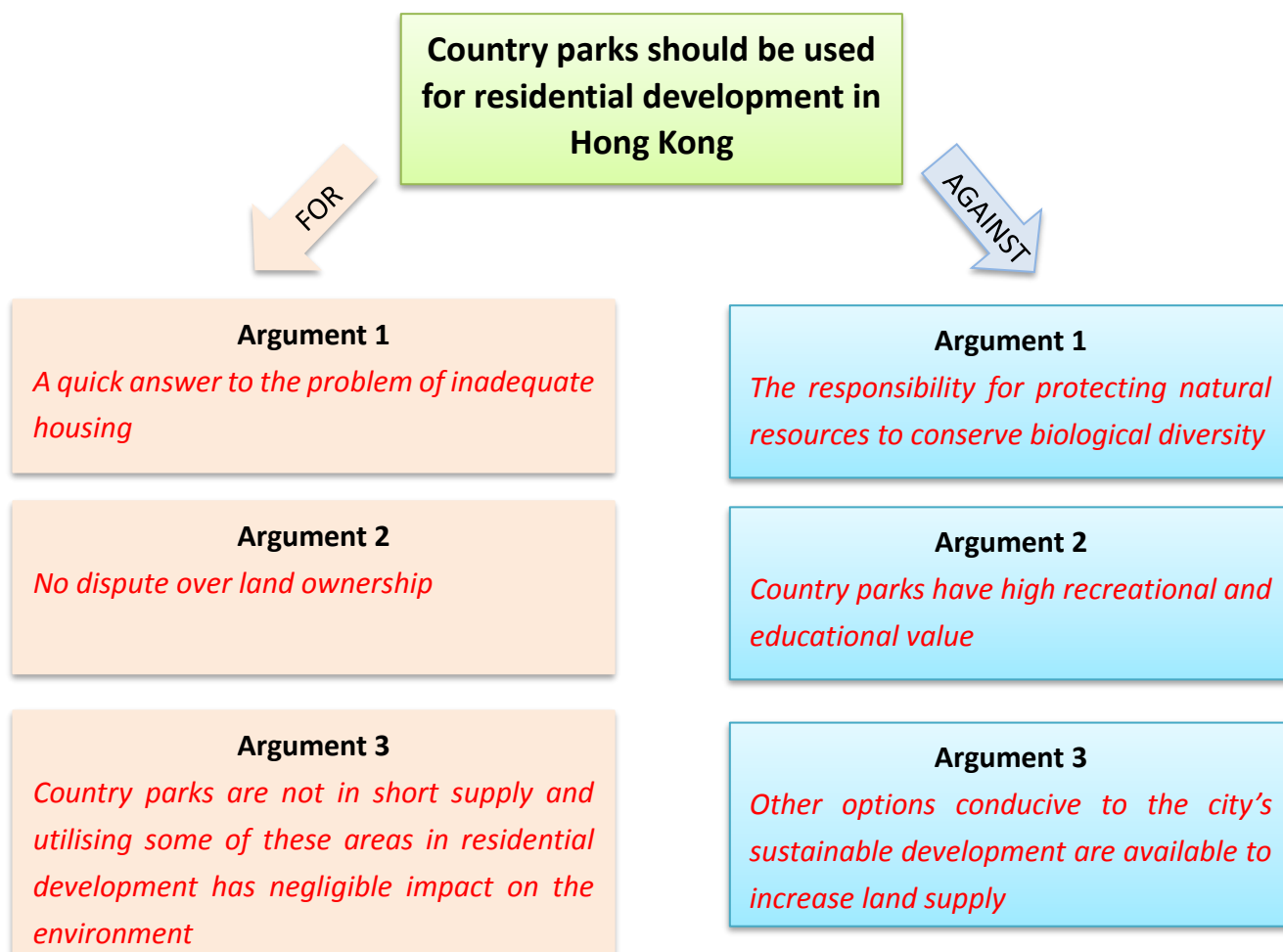


Writer	<i>The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department</i>	<i>A person who is against pulling down village houses for residential development</i>
Possible source of text	<i>a report/fact sheet on the country parks in Hong Kong</i>	<i>a letter to the editor/a post on an online forum</i>
Target audience	<i>the general public/country park users</i>	<i>newspaper readers/Internet users</i>
Purpose	<i>to provide factual information on the country parks:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the size of the country parks</i> - <i>who manages the country parks</i> - <i>number of visitors</i> - <i>common activities in the country parks</i> 	<i>to express strong views against pulling down village houses for residential development/persuading the readers to support his/her views</i>

Writing style	<p><i>* <u>argumentative/descriptive/informative/</u> narrative</i></p> <p><i>Reason(s) for your answer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>containing lots of facts, e.g. 44,300 hectares, instead of words that present personal views or give subjective description</i> 	<p><i>*<u>argumentative/descriptive/informative/</u> narrative</i></p> <p><i>Reason(s) for your answer:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>using adjectives and adverbs that convey the writer's attitude, e.g. ridiculous, innocently</i> - <i>using intensifiers for emphatic purposes, e.g. definitely, literally</i> - <i>using rhetorical questions to deny a point, e.g. How can people innocently assume that...?</i>
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*Underline the correct answer.

3. Read *Texts 6* and *7*. Write three arguments FOR or AGAINST utilising country park areas in residential development in Hong Kong with reasons/supporting details. Then share your arguments with your peers.



Teacher's notes

- ✧ Assign half of the class to write arguments for utilising country parks in residential development in Hong Kong and the other half against the proposal.
- ✧ Remind students to draw on *Texts 6* and *7*, which touch on both sides of the proposal.
- ✧ Allow six minutes for sharing of ideas in groups of four, and get some groups to present them. Have students note down arguments from the opponent in the above graphic organiser.

Text 6 – Hong Kong Fact Sheet

HONG KONG : THE FACTS



Country Parks and Conservation

COUNTRY PARKS

Although Hong Kong is one of the world's metropolises, out of the 1,108 square kilometres of land, about three-quarters is countryside. Scenically, Hong Kong has a great deal to offer – a landscape rising from sandy beaches and rocky foreshores to heights of almost 1,000 metres, woodlands and mountain ranges covered by open grassland and a variety of scenic vistas rarely, if ever, matched in so small a territorial unit.

The Country Parks Ordinance provides a legal framework for the designation, development and management of country parks and special areas. A total of 24 country parks have been designated for the purposes of nature conservation, countryside recreation and outdoor education.

The Parks: The country parks and special areas, which cover 44,300 hectares, comprise scenic hills, woodlands, reservoirs and coastline in all parts of Hong Kong. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) manages the parks and is responsible for tree planting, plantation enhancement, conservation education, fire prevention and fighting, development control and provision of recreational and educational facilities. Over 11 million visitors were recorded in 2013 and most visitors engaged in hiking, leisure walking, fitness exercise, barbecuing, family picnics and camping.

CONSERVATION

The nature conservation policy is to regulate, protect and manage natural resources that are important for the conservation of biological diversity of Hong Kong in a sustainable manner, taking into account social and economic considerations, for the benefit and enjoyment of the present and future generations of the community. The proportion of land area put under the protected area system in Hong Kong compares favourably with other cities/places at similar stage of economic development. Moreover, despite its small size and rapid development over the years, Hong Kong still enjoys a rich biological diversity.

(Adapted from http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/country_parks.pdf)

Teacher's notes

Demonstrate how to locate the key words and paraphrase the main ideas using the text under "Country Parks".

- *What scenic spots can be found in Hong Kong? (Sandy beaches, rocky foreshores, woodlands, mountain ranges)*
- *According to the writer, for what purposes can country parks be used? (Nature conservation, recreation, education)*
- *Drawing on the information presented in this text, can you develop an argument against utilising country park areas in residential development? (The value of country parks, which lies in their impact on the environment and our well-being, should not be underestimated.)*

Text 7 – Letters to the editor

A. Our country parks make Hong Kong unique among the major cities of the world. Having personally witnessed how much expatriates and overseas investors adore hiking and camping in our country parks which are easily accessible, I am sure developing country park land would impact greatly on business and the amount of foreign investment in our city.

Why was Hong Kong crowned the “Best City” in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s “Spatially Adjusted Livability Index” in 2012? The most important factor is the availability of green space for the healthy development of a metropolitan city.

Central

C. Some people may argue that there is no point in preserving country parks simply for the sake of wildlife conservation, given the social ills of inadequate housing. However, these people seem to be unaware of how communing with nature can greatly benefit our mental and physical health. A recent study in Scotland reveals that strolling through a leafy park can reduce brain fatigue. Centres set up by the Japanese government for forest therapy is another example. Do not underappreciate the benefits of country parks. Protect them to foster the well-being of the citizens.

Sham Shui Po

B. It is simply ridiculous to pull down village houses, to which we indigenous male villagers are entitled, in order to ‘increase land supply’ and ‘ease the thorny issue of over-crowdedness’! How can people innocently assume that many of our villagers have become urban dwellers who are not attached to our ancestral culture and heritage? This is definitely not true.

Alternatively, slicing a small portion of country parks to speed up urban development would probably cause minute impact on the environment and literally no dispute over land ownership. The country parks belong to all of us!

Sai Kung

D. City planners claim that there are options other than using the readily available country parks to increase land supply. Nevertheless, these options are entirely infeasible. Reclamation, creation of man-made islands or even development of underground homes may sound fabulous, yet they do not appear with a swing of a magic wand. Can we afford any more delays in providing for the numerous hopeless children and elderly now living in tiny cages and coffin-sized subdivided flats?

Kowloon City

(Adapted from the articles “Plenty of land outside country parks could be used for development” and “Why country parks benefit Hong Kong” in SCMP)

Teacher’s notes

Demonstrate how to locate the key words and paraphrase the main ideas using *Letter to the Editor D*.

- *Does the writer support using country parks for residential development? Why? (The writer is positive about developing country parks into resident areas. He suggests that putting the alternative proposals (e.g. creating man-made islands and building underground homes) into practice is easier said than done.)*
- *Drawing on the views presented in this text, can you develop an argument for utilising country park areas in residential development? (Using country parks for residential development can address the urgent need to provide adequate housing for the citizens.)*

4. Counter-arguments and refutations are often employed to strengthen the persuasiveness of one's arguments. A counter-argument introduces a point made by the opponent while a refutation explains why it is not true or important. Identify the counter-argument and refutation in the following paragraph.

Some people may argue that there is no point in preserving country parks simply for the sake of wildlife conservation, given the social ills of inadequate housing. However, these people seem to be unaware of how communing with nature can greatly benefit our mental and physical health. A recent study in Scotland reveals that strolling through a leafy park can reduce brain fatigue. Centres set up by the Japanese government for forest therapy is another example. *Do not underestimate the benefits of country parks. Protect them to foster the well-being of the citizens.*

5. In pairs, select two arguments presented by the opponent. Write your counter-arguments and refutations.

Country parks should be used for residential development in Hong Kong

Counter-arguments	Refutations
<i>e.g. Some people argue that turning country parks into residential areas is the quick answer to the problem of inadequate housing.</i>	<i>e.g. Nevertheless, this quick fix for the shortage of land also represents an immediate, long-term hazard to the environment. Developing housing with country park land indeed harms natural habitats and threatens some of the rich areas of biodiversity in Hong Kong. Can we shirk the responsibility to build a sustainable environment for future generations?</i>
<i>e.g. It is generally felt that re-developing country parks could have strong adverse impact on the environment.</i>	<i>e.g. While this concern is understandable, those holding this view seem to have equated the proposal with exploiting the country park areas indiscriminately. In fact, some experts have already identified certain parts of country park areas which are of lower ecological value and are therefore more appropriate for building houses. Environmental impact could be kept to a minimum by way of careful planning.</i>

Part B: Presenting counter-arguments and refutations

Learning objectives:

To enable students to

- use appropriate language structures to present counter-arguments and refutations

Underline the expression(s) used to introduce the counter-argument and circle the expression(s) to present the refutation in the following paragraph.

City planners claim that there are options other than using the readily available country parks to increase land supply. Nevertheless, these options are entirely infeasible. Reclamation, creation of man-made islands or even development of underground homes may sound fabulous, yet they do not appear with a swing of a magic wand. Can we afford any more delays in providing for the numerous hopeless children and elderly now living in tiny cages and coffin-sized subdivided flats?

Think of other examples of expressions to introduce counter-arguments and refutations. Write them in the table below.

Introducing counter-arguments	Presenting refutations
<p><i>e.g. It is said/thought/believed/claimed that ...</i></p> <p><i>e.g. Some people/Opponents/Those who disagree may argue/think/say/believe/claim that ...</i></p> <p><i>e.g. One might object that ...</i></p> <p><i>e.g. It seems true/possible that ...</i></p>	<p><i>e.g. Yet/However/Still/Nevertheless/Nonetheless/Notwithstanding/On the other hand</i></p> <p><i>e.g. While the claim may be widely supported, it is indeed impractical/it is not necessarily true because ...</i></p>

Task 3 Examining an Argumentative Essay

In preparation for your own essay, you will study a winning essay of the writing competition last year and analyse its language features and structure.

Learning objectives:

To enable students to

- develop skills in identifying the purpose, audience and overall structure of a piece of writing
- understand how the overall organisation of a text and the use of style and register can help achieve the writer's purpose

Text 8 – An email from Ms Wong

To: jojowong@eless.edu.hk, lizawong@eless.edu.hk, billychong@eless.edu.hk

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Essay Writing Competition – Housing in Hong Kong

Dear all

I write to give you some help with the essay for the writing competition.

Last year, S4 students entered a writing competition organised by a youth service group called *Young Power* and wrote about consumer welfare and interest. I have attached for your reference the notice about the competition and a winning essay, which should give you some idea of the text features and organisation commonly adopted in argumentative writing. Feel free to approach me for more help.

Young Power Writing Competition

Background

The competition aims to enhance students' awareness of topical issues, encourage them to think critically and provide them with a good opportunity to improve their English skills.

Topic

Advertising is a billion-dollar industry which encourages consumption and economic growth. While some consumers appreciate the humour and originality of certain advertisements, they can have adverse effects on individuals and society. Write an essay of about 400 words discussing your views and explaining why advertising does more harm than good with examples. Give a title to your essay.

Prize

A full scholarship to participate in international youth exchange camps (three winners)

Points to note:

- Entrants must be under 18 on 31st July 2016.
- Deadline for receipt of entries: 12 noon, 31st July 2016

Regards

Ms Wong

Text 9 – An argumentative essay

Aggressive marketing in the media

Advertising plays a pivotal role in the highly competitive marketplace. It enables consumers to know what is on offer and make more informed choices. However, many advertisements go to extremes and stir up controversy over the impact on consumerism and consumer interests, which **badly** needs addressing.

Intensifiers to create a forceful tone

Despite the fact that advertising stimulates business and benefits economic growth, it **indeed** encourages wasteful consumption to such an extent that we as consumers are posing a threat to the environment. **Some advertisements for**

Real-life examples

credit cards put emphasis on discount rates and free gifts to the cardholders. Others draw our attention to limited promotional periods which drive us to impulsive purchase. In

this connection it is **not uncommon** for us to become obsessed with buying products which may not be needed. Tons of raw materials are often wastefully exploited to cope with the ever-growing demand for consumer goods. Worse still, excessive consumption is generally coupled with the rapid disposal of 'old' but usable products. **A recent report**

Citing survey findings

published by Friends of the Earth painted an alarming picture: the disposal of e-waste has risen threefold over the past five years. Is our society ready to handle such an enormous

Rhetorical questions

amount of waste? Thanks to heavy consumption, **electronic gadgets, electrical appliances, clothes and all sorts of packaging materials** being dumped add pressure to the overflowing landfills and exacerbate pollution.

While some advertisements deserve credit for the high degree of novelty, there are many others which spread problematic messages. **You probably know quite a few who are hit hard by the absolutely skeletal figures in slimming advertisements and end up dieting furiously and exercising incessantly to stay thin. Their minds are thoroughly obsessed with artificial images of perfectly-proportioned celebrities,**

presenting a twisted meaning of health and making them feel pressured into shedding weight. Obviously, if we are not made to change our perception of beauty, how can marketers sell new products? The young audience are just as vulnerable to the narrow definition of beauty and health. A study conducted by the Hong Kong Eating Disorders Centre last year revealed that there was a marked increase in the number of teenagers who had tried losing weight while only 5 per cent were identified as being overweight. Similarly, most advertisements for beer associate the product with such desires as excitement, friendship and physical attractiveness. The crux of the issue is that these advertisements tend to appeal to the emotional needs of the audience. Simply put, it is the distorted values presented in the advertisements which are harmful to the audience.

Counter-argument and refutation

Public pressure and successful government regulation are often said to have limited our exposure to seriously deadly things in advertisements. One may suggest that advertisements for cigarettes are banned and those promoting other unhealthy products are becoming a rarity. But is advertising really clear of anything harmful? From the day a child is first exposed to the outside world, they are surrounded with the overwhelming messages of the junk food industry. According to a recent research, the number of advertisements for sugary cereals, candies and fast food shown during weekend morning children's TV programmes has risen sharply. Not surprisingly, junk food marketers have not missed an even more direct channel to brainwash children. Nearly every major junk food product has its own website designed to appeal to children, with interactive games or animations featuring toys and cartoon characters. For a child to resist the soft sell is almost impossible. Collectively, these advertisements which downplay nutritional value but stress fun and good taste definitely contribute to the mounting rate of obesity and accordingly the increased burden on medical care.

In a free market exposure to advertising is beyond doubt inevitable. People of all ages should be sensitised to the need to critically evaluate the purpose and truthfulness of advertisements. It is through the heightened awareness of how they work that we can become informed and intelligent consumers.

Understanding the task requirement

1. The PRAFT strategy can help us better understand the reader-writer relationship and the use of language functions to achieve particular communicative purposes. Read *Text 8* and present a preliminary analysis of the writing task by completing the table below.

Purpose What is the writing for?	<i>To argue about aggressive marketing and advertising</i>
Role of the writer What is the writer's role?	<i>An S4 student</i>
Audience Who will be reading the writing?	<i>Judging panel</i>
Format What is the text type for the writing?	<i>An essay</i>
Topic Who or what is the subject of the writing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The downside of advertising and how it outweighs the potential benefits</i> • <i>To warn readers against the negative impact of advertising and encourage them to be sensible consumers</i>

Teacher's notes

Draw students' attention to how the five components (PRAFT) provide a clue about the use of language items and structures and how ideas are organised into different paragraphs.

Identifying the writer's attitude

2. What is the writer's attitude towards advertising? Find clues in *Text 9* to support your answer.

The writer is critical of the impact of advertising. Some examples of clues are as follows:

Title: *Aggressive marketing in the media*

Introduction: *Many advertisements go to extremes and stir up controversy over the impact on consumerism and consumer interests, which badly needs addressing.*

Conclusion: *People of all ages should be sensitised to the need to critically evaluate the purpose and truthfulness of advertisements.*

Teacher's notes

- ✧ Allow students one minute to read Text 9 quickly and get the gist.
- ✧ Guide them to describe the writer's attitude appropriately (e.g. negative attitude, critical of, disapproval of).
- ✧ Have students share in pairs the clues in support of their answers.
- ✧ Stress that the writer's viewpoint is usually expressed in the title, the introduction and the conclusion.

Text organisation

3. Some sentences in *Text 9* are missing. Decide which of the following, if inserted into (1)-(3) in the text, can best complete the meaning of the paragraphs.

- A. While some advertisements deserve credit for the high degree of novelty, there are many others which spread problematic messages.
- B. Many studies have revealed that our landfills will be saturated very soon and it's time the government launched initiatives to cope with waste disposal in a sustainable manner.
- C. Despite the fact that advertising stimulates business and benefits economic growth, it indeed encourages wasteful consumption to such an extent that we as consumers are posing a threat to the environment.
- D. Who are in a better position than parents to guide children in making food choice?
- E. Slimming advertisements are certainly to blame for distorting the true meaning of health and beauty.
- F. Collectively, these advertisements which downplay nutritional value but stress fun and good taste definitely contribute to the mounting rate of obesity and accordingly the increased burden on medical care.

Put the correct letter (A-F) in the space provided.

(1): C (2): A (3): F

4. What are the writer's intentions in the different paragraphs in *Text 9*? Are they in line with the overall purpose of the text?

Paragraph 1	<i>e.g. To highlight the adverse impact of advertising despite its role in helping consumers make informed decisions</i>
Paragraphs 2-3	<i>To explain the negative impact of advertising on the environment and consumers</i>
Paragraph 4	<i>To present a counter-argument (that regulation has minimised our exposure to advertisements for harmful products) and refute it with a line of reasoning</i>
Paragraph 5	<i>To remind readers to read/view advertisements critically and encourage them to be sensible consumers</i>

Teacher's notes

Lead students to think about the way individual paragraphs help achieve the intended purpose of the text (i.e. to convince readers of a point of view).

- Paragraph 1 (introduction): *to increase persuasiveness by stressing the fact that the adverse impact of advertising outweighs its generally accepted value, all things considered.*
- Paragraphs 2-4 (body): *to develop arguments from various perspectives*
- Paragraph 5 (conclusion): *to relate the issue to readers and remind them to be sensible consumers*

Language and Style

5. The writer uses a lot of strong words/phrases to appeal to reader's emotion and create a persuasive tone. Put them in the table below. One has been provided as an example.

Paragraph 2	e.g. <u>excessive</u> consumption <i>wasteful consumption, posing a <u>threat</u>, obsessed, <u>tons of</u> raw materials, wastefully exploited, <u>rapid</u> disposal, <u>alarming</u> picture, <u>enormous</u> amount, exacerbate</i>
Paragraph 3	<i><u>problematic</u> messages, <u>skeletal</u> figures, <u>artificial</u> images, <u>twisted</u> meaning, pressured, vulnerable, <u>narrow</u> definition, <u>distorted</u> values, harmful</i>
Paragraph 4	<i><u>overwhelming</u> messages, <u>brainwash</u> children, increased <u>burden</u></i>

Teacher's notes

- ✧ Explain to students that Text 9 includes some strong words/phrases to appeal to readers' emotion and strengthen the persuasive tone. Draw students' attention to the example provided and elicit from them how the word "excessive" helps to convey the core message of the text (i.e. it gives an impression that public consumption has reached an unreasonably high level by virtue of heavy consumption).
- ✧ Assign each of pair of students a particular paragraph and have them highlight the use of strong words/phrases that appeal to readers' emotion. Ask students to categorise the words identified:
 - Adjectives (e.g. alarming picture, twisted meaning)
 - Quantifiers (e.g. tons of)
 - Nouns (e.g. threat, burden)
 - Verbs (e.g. exacerbate, brainwash)
 - Adverbs (e.g. wastefully exploited)

6. Identify the counter-argument and refutation presented in *Text 9*.

Please refer to Text 9 for the suggested answers.

7. (a) Read the following sentences taken from Paragraph 2 and discuss with your partners how they convince readers of the writer's point of view. Some clues have been underlined for you.
- (i) Despite the fact that advertising stimulates business and benefits economic growth, it indeed encourages wasteful consumption to such an extent that we as consumers are posing a threat to the environment.
- Using an intensifier: to draw the readers' attention and reinforce arguments by emphasising a degree of certainty*

- (ii) A recent report published by Friends of the Earth painted an alarming picture: the disposal of e-waste has risen threefold over the past five years.

Citing survey findings: to avoid charges of presenting unfounded claims by incorporating evidence from authoritative sources

(Recap on the language items for describing trends and changes covered in Task 1)

- (iii) Is our society ready to handle such an enormous amount of waste?

Asking a rhetorical question: it is not meant to be answered but used to make readers think. It serves to make the point that the continuous production of waste due to the rapid disposal of consumer goods has a damaging impact on the environment

- (iv) Thanks to heavy consumption, electronic gadgets, electrical appliances, clothes and all sorts of packaging materials being dumped add pressure to the overflowing landfills and exacerbate pollution.

Quoting real-life examples: to urge readers to associate themselves with an argument by stating examples relevant to their everyday experience

- (b) Are the strategies above adopted in paragraphs 3 and 4? Identify relevant examples with your partners.

Please refer to Text 9 for suggested answers.

Task 4 Writing an Essay for the Competition

Learning objectives:

To enable students to

- plan and produce a coherent and structured text
- present views and arguments clearly and logically
- use the salient features of an argumentative text
- reflect on their own learning and develop skills in monitoring and evaluating their progress

Situation: You and your classmates have decided to enter the writing competition organised by *Young Power*. Read the notice below and write your entry.

Young Power Writing Competition

Background

The competition aims to enhance students' awareness of topical issues, encourage them to think critically and provide them with a good opportunity to improve their English skills.

Topic

The poor living conditions of underprivileged families and the long wait for public rental housing have received considerable attention. In view of the city's housing problems, there is some discussion on the possibility of building houses on country park land. Write an essay of about 400 words discussing your views on utilising country park areas in residential development. Give a title to your essay.

Prize

A full scholarship to participate in international youth exchange camps (three winners)

Points to note:

- Entrants must be under 18 on 31st July 2017.
- Deadline for receipt of entries: 12 noon, 31st July 2017

Writing Plan

Purpose	
Role of the writer	
Audience	
Format	
Topic	

How should I categorise ideas into different paragraphs?

To achieve the purpose of the essay, what language structures or expressions should I use?

Peer Assessment Form

Date: _____

Task: *To argue for or against the following topic:*
“Developing country parks into residential areas does more good than harm to Hong Kong”

Text Type: *Argumentative essay*

Please tick: ✓	Needs Improvement	Meets some requirements	Satisfactory	Good	Well Done
A. Content					
1. Providing background information about the issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Presenting arguments from different perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Substantiating arguments with real-life examples, evidence and findings from authoritative sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Presenting counter-argument(s) and refutation(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Relating the issue to readers and encourage them to think deeply about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Providing an essay title in support of the writer's intention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Language and Style					
1. Using suitable vocabulary related to housing issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Using strong words/phrases to appeal to readers' emotion and create a more persuasive tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Using appropriate language items (e.g. intensifiers, rhetorical questions) to emphasise viewpoints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Organisation					
1. Five to six paragraphs, each with a clear focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Using appropriate topic sentences, supporting details and concluding sentences to create logical development of ideas in paragraphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Using appropriate cohesive devices for clearer signposting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Comments					

Teacher Assessment Form

Date: _____

Task: To argue for or against the following topic:"Developing country parks into residential areas does more good than harm to Hong Kong"Text Type: Argumentative essay

Please tick: ✓	Needs Improvement	Meets some requirements	Satisfactory	Good	Well Done
A. Content					
1. Providing background information about the issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Presenting arguments from different perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Substantiating arguments with real-life examples, evidence and findings from authoritative sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Presenting counter-argument(s) and refutation(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Relating the issue to readers and encourage them to think deeply about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Providing an essay title in support of the writer's intention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Language and Style					
1. Using suitable vocabulary related to housing issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Using strong words/phrases to appeal to readers' emotion and create a more persuasive tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Using appropriate language items (e.g. intensifiers, rhetorical questions) to emphasise viewpoints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Organisation					
1. Five to six paragraphs, each with a clear focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Using appropriate topic sentences, supporting details and concluding sentences to create logical development of ideas in paragraphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Using appropriate cohesive devices for clearer signposting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Comments					

Teacher's notes

Pre-writing: Elicit from students what they have come up with on the writing plan, and provide feedback as appropriate. Distribute the assessment form and discuss with students the success criteria, which, among others, include:

- the use of topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentence
- overall organisation of a text
- presenting counter-arguments and refutations
- language for creating a persuasive tone

Post-writing: Read students' writing, identify the strengths as well as problematic areas, and provide written feedback in the Teacher Assessment Form. Display samples of student writing and discuss the general performance. Provide suggestions for improvement with reference to the samples.

Areas for improvement	Actions to be taken

I need to seek advice/assistance from my teacher on the following areas:

Teacher's notes

- ✧ Discuss with individual students their self-reflection and goals set. Provide positive feedback and suggestions on how the learning goals and the proposed actions can be better aligned.
- ✧ Advise students how they can seek help to solve their learning problems and make further progress.

Situation

Young Power, a youth service group which encourages young people to participate in out-of-school activities and promotes their all-round development, organises an essay competition related to the theme “Sustainable Housing for the 21st Century”. The three winners of the competition will receive a full scholarship to participate in international youth exchange camps.

You and your classmates are interested in joining the competition. You will work together in preparation for the competition under the guidance of your English teacher, Ms Wong, and each of you will submit an entry for the competition.

Task 1 Understanding the Housing Issues in Hong Kong

You will identify the housing issues in Hong Kong based on the information collected. You will also discuss possible solutions to the problems identified.

Task 2 Exploring the Issues of Country Park Conservation and Residential Development

You will read a fact sheet and letters to the editor to identify arguments for and against utilising country park areas in residential development, and present your own views on the issue.

Task 3 Examining an Argumentative Essay

In preparation for your own essay, you will study a winning essay of the essay writing competition last year and analyse its language features and structure.

Task 4 Writing an Essay for the Competition

You will write an essay FOR or AGAINST the topic “Developing country parks into residential areas does more good than harm to Hong Kong”.

Task 1 Understanding the Housing Issues in Hong Kong

You will identify the housing issues in Hong Kong based on the information collected. You will also discuss possible solutions to the problems identified.

Part A: Synthesising ideas across texts**Text 1 – An excerpt from an interview with a property analyst**

Q: How would you describe the trend of property prices in the past few years in Hong Kong?

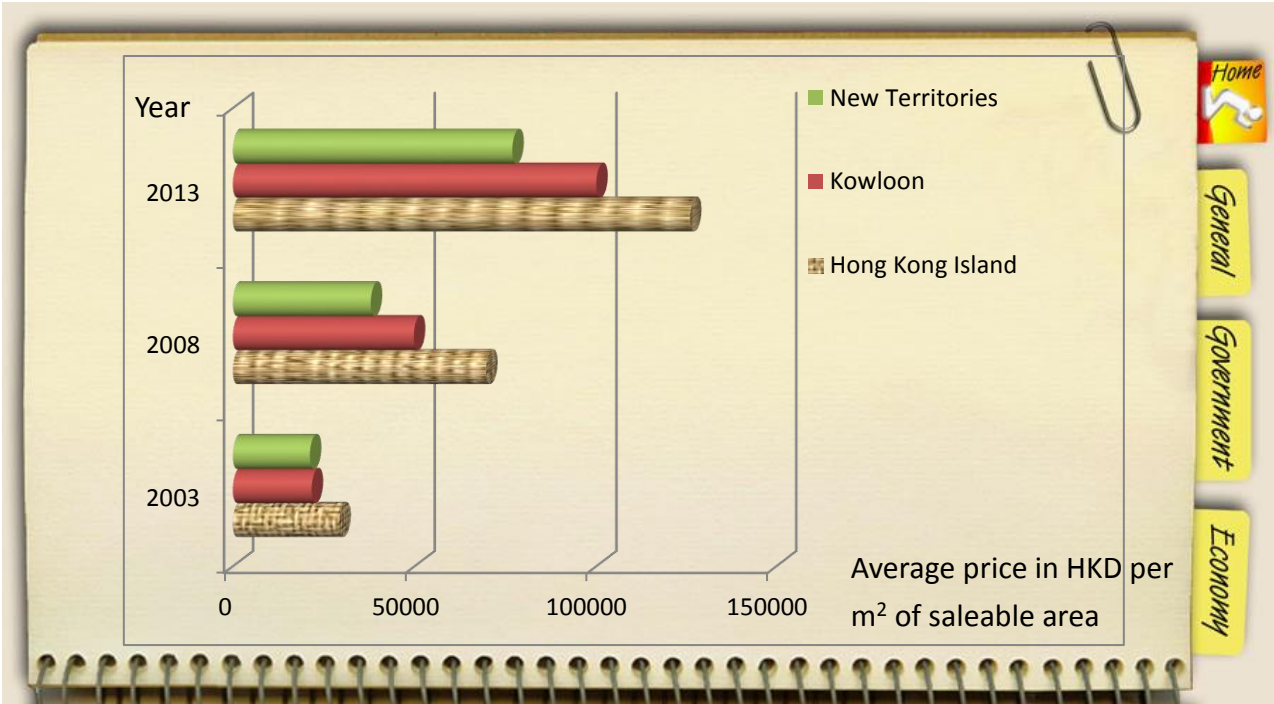
A: According to the government statistics released in January, property prices have risen relentlessly for four years and are still rising, though at a slower pace now. Property prices rose by only 4.28% last year, which was in stark contrast to the marked increase of 18.92% in the year before last.

Q: Some people anticipate that private home prices will fluctuate dramatically for some time next year. What do you think?

A: Some analysts forecast property prices to go up slightly in the next quarter but fall quite significantly next year. However, I expect Hong Kong home prices to pick up progressively this year and reach a peak in the coming two years due to the huge demand for housing.

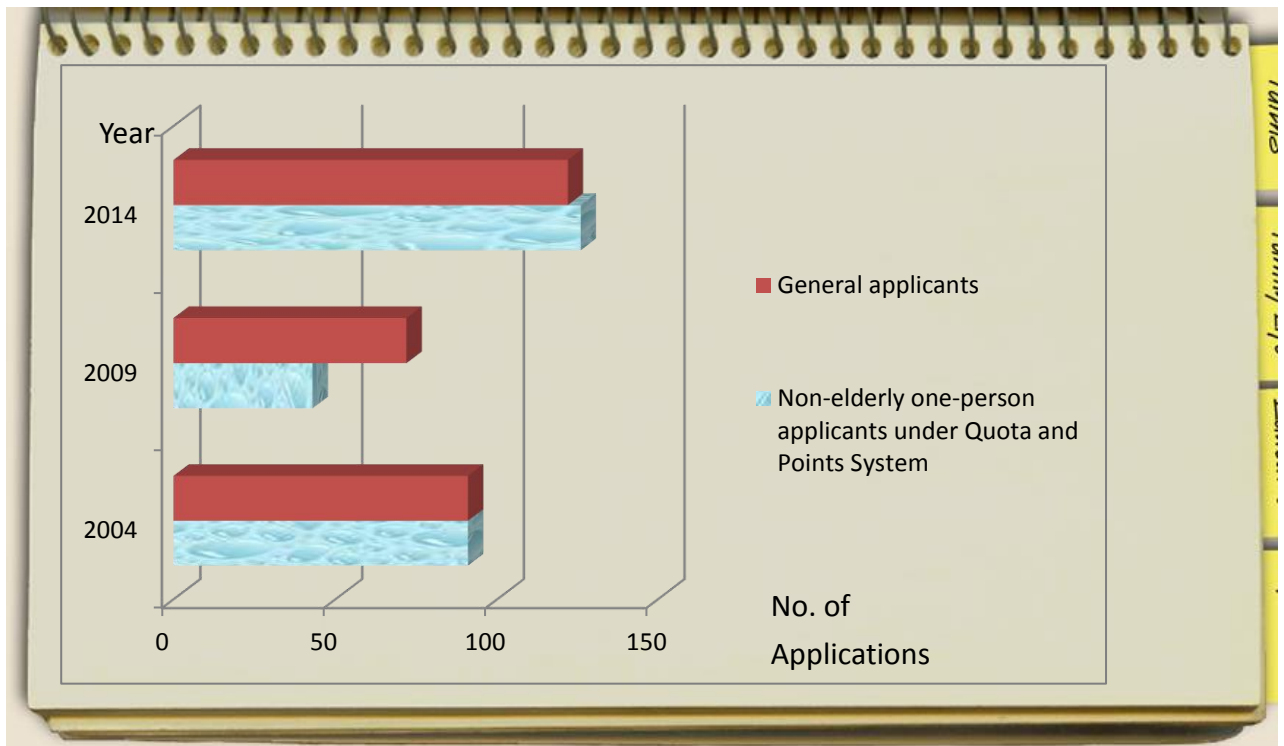
Text 2 – Government statistics

Prices of private flats in different regions



(Adapted from <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/common/pdf/about-us/publications-and-statistics/HIF.pdf>)

Text 3 – Government statistics

Number of applications for public rental housing

**Numbers in thousands*

**The average wait time for general applicants in 2014 was 3 years.*

(Adapted from <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/common/pdf/about-us/publications-and-statistics/HIF.pdf>)

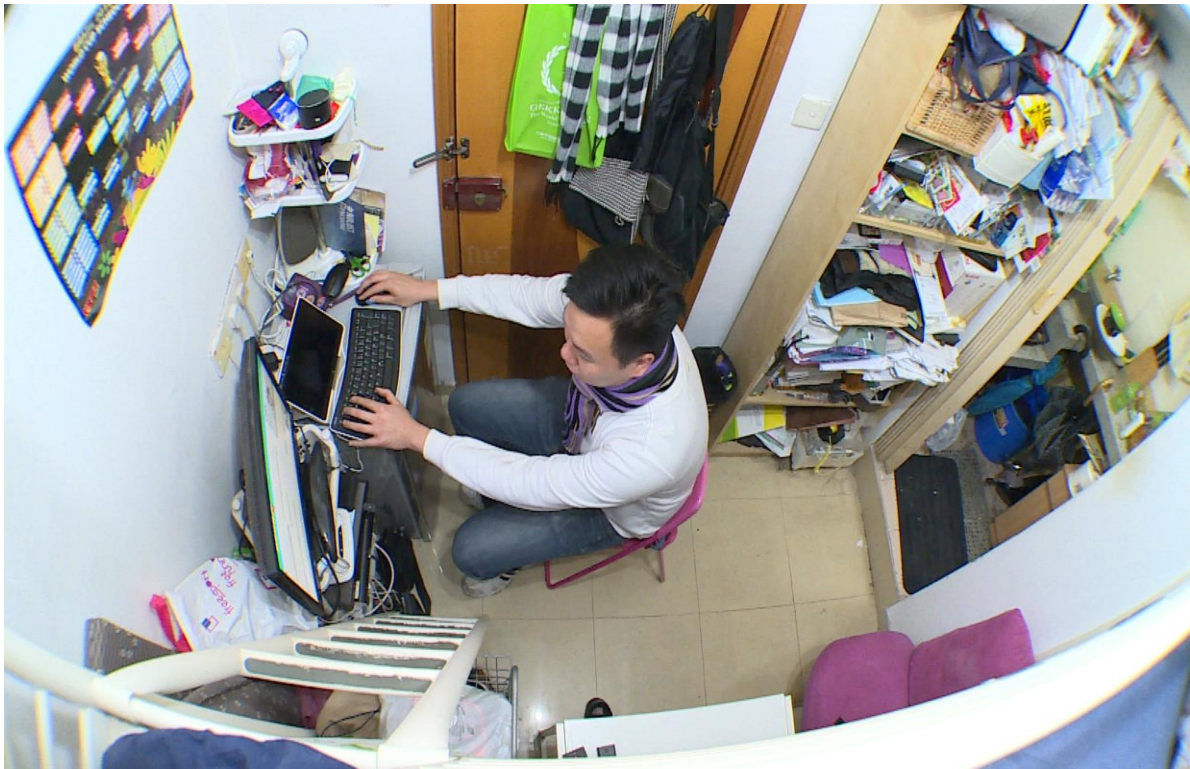
Text 4 – An excerpt from a research report

Low-income families are the biggest victims of the persistent rent hikes in Hong Kong. Yet the recently announced Policy Address and Budget Speech show no sign of stepping up welfare provision for this group of people. Undertaken by Oxfam Hong Kong, a survey titled “The Living Conditions of Tenant Households Who Have Been on the Waiting List for Public Rental Housing for Over 3 Years” found that over 70% of poor, non-CSSA (Comprehensive Social Security Assistance) tenant households (the so-called “N have-nots”) had not received any offer of public rental housing even after waiting for over four years.

The survey, which covered 501 families, revealed that 73.7% of the respondents had yet to receive the first offer of public rental flats even after waiting for 4.4 years on average. Of these cases, over 76% had not gone through the vetting process. Almost 78% of those who received the first offer had waited longer than three years.

Concerning the living conditions of the respondents who were in the queue for public rental housing, over 80% of them resided in expensive, small-sized rental flats, commonly known as subdivided flats, in urban areas. Despite paying high rent, the living density per person was fairly high. According to the survey, 68.3% of the respondents lived in cubicles, bedspaces or subdivided flats. The median living space per person was about 4.2 square metres (or 45 square feet), far below the minimum living space standard of 5.5 square metres per person set by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. About 61.8% of the surveyed households lived in overcrowded conditions.

(Adapted from http://www.oxfam.org.hk/filemgr/2040/OHKstandpointsonhousing_editedeng_final.pdf)

Text 5 – A photo caption

A more affordable choice for the younger generation – a subdivided flat with limited space for work and rest

From RTHK

(Source: <http://programme.rthk.org.hk/rthk/tv/programme.php?name=tv/hkcc&p=858&pid=109439&m=photo&e=292515>)

1. In groups of four, identify the housing issues and supporting details presented in *Texts 1-5*.

Texts	Housing Issues	Supporting Details

2. In **groups of four**, discuss some possible solutions to the above issues.

<i>Possible Solutions</i>

Part B: Describing trends and changes

1. Underline the expressions for describing trends and changes in the following sentences. Discuss the different parts of speech of such expressions.
 - i) Some people anticipate that private home prices will fluctuate dramatically for some time next year.
 - ii) Some analysts forecast property prices to go up slightly in the next quarter but fall quite significantly next year. However, I expect Hong Kong home prices to pick up progressively this year and reach a peak in the coming two years due to the huge demand for housing.
 - iii) According to the government statistics released in January, property prices have risen relentlessly for four years and are still rising, though at a slower pace now. Property prices rose by only 4.28% last year, which was in stark contrast to the marked increase of 18.92% in the year before last.

2. Categorise the expressions for describing trends and changes. Think of more examples for each category.

Upward Trend		Downward Trend		Steady Trend		Others	

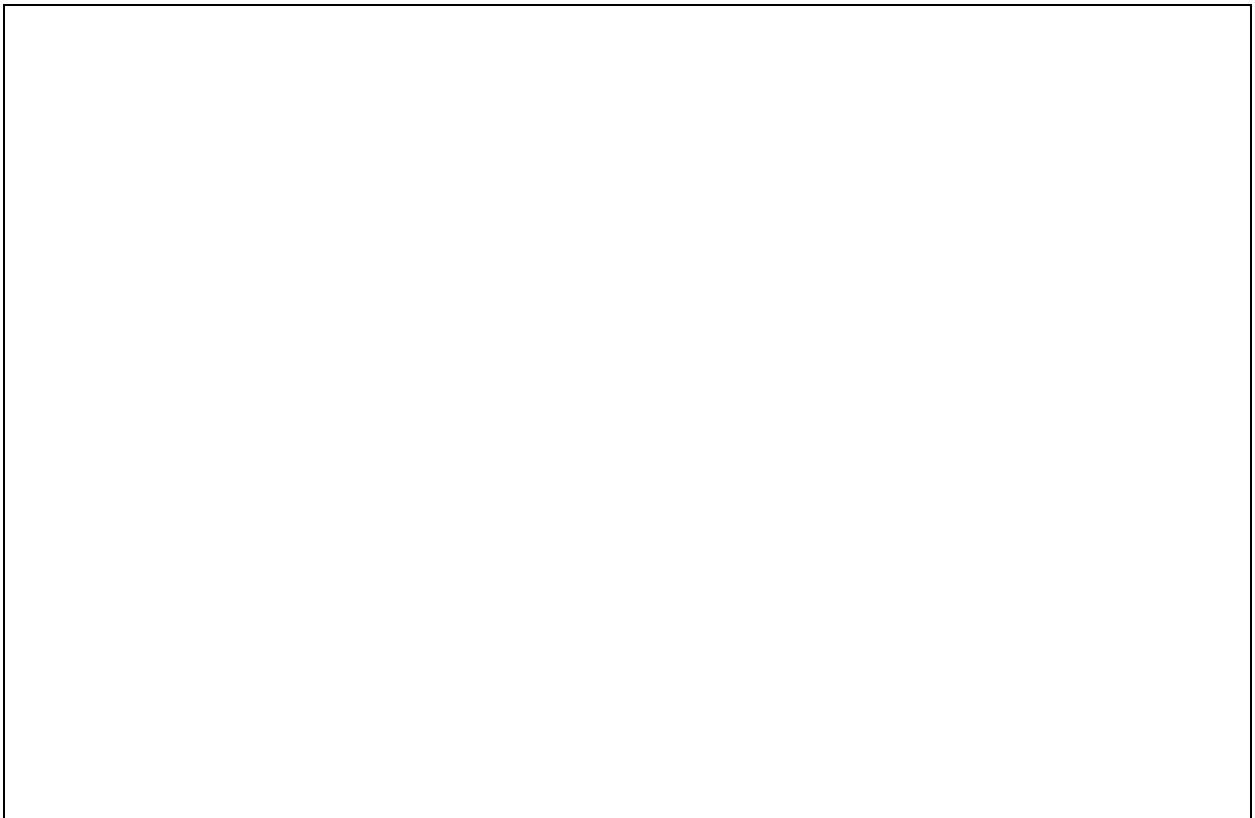
Describing the speed/extent of change	

Task 2 Exploring the Issues of Country Park Conservation and Residential Development

You will read a fact sheet and letters to the editor to identify arguments for and against utilising country park areas in residential development, and present your own views on the issue.

Part A: Getting ready for a mini-debate

1. To alleviate the housing problems in Hong Kong, it is proposed that part of Hong Kong's country parks be released to develop housing. **In pairs**, discuss your views on this proposal. Give reasons to support your stance.

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write their responses to the mini-debate question.

2. The following are the excerpts of two texts. Study the excerpts and complete the table of comparison.

<p>The country parks and special areas, which cover 44,300 hectares, comprise scenic hills, woodlands, reservoirs and coastline in all parts of Hong Kong. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) manages the parks and is responsible for tree planting, plantation enhancement, conservation education, fire prevention and fighting, development control and provision of recreational and educational facilities. Over 11 million visitors were recorded in 2013 and most visitors engaged in hiking, leisure walking, fitness exercise, barbecuing, family picnics and camping.</p>	<p>It is simply ridiculous to pull down village houses, to which we indigenous male villagers are entitled, in order to ‘increase land supply’ and ‘ease the thorny issue of over-crowdedness’! How can people innocently assume that many of our villagers have become urban dwellers who are not attached to our ancestral culture and heritage? This is definitely not true.</p> <p>Alternatively, slicing a small portion of country parks to speed up urban development would probably cause minute impact on the environment and literally no dispute over land ownership. The country parks belong to all of us!</p> <p>Sai Kung</p>
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Writer		
Possible source of text		
Target audience		
Purpose		

Writing style	<i>*argumentative/descriptive/informative/narrative</i>	<i>*argumentative/descriptive/informative/narrative</i>
----------------------	---	---

*Underline the correct answer.

3. Read *Texts 6* and *7*. Write three arguments FOR or AGAINST utilising country park areas in residential development in Hong Kong with reasons/supporting details. Then share your arguments with your peers.

Country parks should be used for residential development in Hong Kong	
FOR	AGAINST
Argument 1	Argument 1
Argument 2	Argument 2
Argument 3	Argument 3

Text 6 – Hong Kong Fact Sheet

HONG KONG : THE FACTS



Country Parks and Conservation

COUNTRY PARKS

Although Hong Kong is one of the world's metropolises, out of the 1,108 square kilometres of land, about three-quarters is countryside. Scenically, Hong Kong has a great deal to offer – a landscape rising from sandy beaches and rocky foreshores to heights of almost 1,000 metres, woodlands and mountain ranges covered by open grassland and a variety of scenic vistas rarely, if ever, matched in so small a territorial unit.

The Country Parks Ordinance provides a legal framework for the designation, development and management of country parks and special areas. A total of 24 country parks have been designated for the purposes of nature conservation, countryside recreation and outdoor education.

The Parks: The country parks and special areas, which cover 44,300 hectares, comprise scenic hills, woodlands, reservoirs and coastline in all parts of Hong Kong. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) manages the parks and is responsible for tree planting, plantation enhancement, conservation education, fire prevention and fighting, development control and provision of recreational and educational facilities. Over 11 million visitors were recorded in 2013 and most visitors engaged in hiking, leisure walking, fitness exercise, barbecuing, family picnics and camping.

CONSERVATION

The nature conservation policy is to regulate, protect and manage natural resources that are important for the conservation of biological diversity of Hong Kong in a sustainable manner, taking into account social and economic considerations, for the benefit and enjoyment of the present and future generations of the community. The proportion of land area put under the protected area system in Hong Kong compares favourably with other cities/places at similar stage of economic development. Moreover, despite its small size and rapid development over the years, Hong Kong still enjoys a rich biological diversity.

(Adapted from http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/country_parks.pdf)

Text 7 – Letters to the editor

A. Our country parks make Hong Kong unique among the major cities of the world. Having personally witnessed how much expatriates and overseas investors adore hiking and camping in our country parks which are easily accessible, I am sure developing country park land would impact greatly on business and the amount of foreign investment in our city.

Why was Hong Kong crowned the “Best City” in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s “Spatially Adjusted Livability Index” in 2012? The most important factor is the availability of green space for the healthy development of a metropolitan city.

Central

C. Some people may argue that there is no point in preserving country parks simply for the sake of wildlife conservation, given the social ills of inadequate housing. However, these people seem to be unaware of how communing with nature can greatly benefit our mental and physical health. A recent study in Scotland reveals that strolling through a leafy park can reduce brain fatigue. Centres set up by the Japanese government for forest therapy is another example. Do not underappreciate the benefits of country parks. Protect them to foster the well-being of the citizens.

Sham Shui Po

B. It is simply ridiculous to pull down village houses, to which we indigenous male villagers are entitled, in order to ‘increase land supply’ and ‘ease the thorny issue of over-crowdedness’! How can people innocently assume that many of our villagers have become urban dwellers who are not attached to our ancestral culture and heritage? This is definitely not true.

Alternatively, slicing a small portion of country parks to speed up urban development would probably cause minute impact on the environment and literally no dispute over land ownership. The country parks belong to all of us!

Sai Kung

D. City planners claim that there are options other than using the readily available country parks to increase land supply. Nevertheless, these options are entirely infeasible. Reclamation, creation of man-made islands or even development of underground homes may sound fabulous, yet they do not appear with a swing of a magic wand. Can we afford any more delays in providing for the numerous hopeless children and elderly now living in tiny cages and coffin-sized subdivided flats?

Kowloon City

(Adapted from the articles “Plenty of land outside country parks could be used for development” and “Why country parks benefit Hong Kong” in SCMP)

4. Counter-arguments and refutations are often employed to strengthen the persuasiveness of one's arguments. A counter-argument introduces a point made by the opponent while a refutation explains why it is not true or important. Identify the counter-argument and refutation in the following paragraph.

Some people may argue that there is no point in preserving country parks simply for the sake of wildlife conservation, given the social ills of inadequate housing. However, these people seem to be unaware of how communing with nature can greatly benefit our mental and physical health. A recent study in Scotland reveals that strolling through a leafy park can reduce brain fatigue. Centres set up by the Japanese government for forest therapy is another example. Do not underappreciate the benefits of country parks. Protect them to foster the well-being of the citizens.

5. In pairs, select two arguments presented by the opponent. Write your counter-arguments and refutations.

Country parks should be used for residential development in Hong Kong

Counter-arguments	Refutations

Part B: Presenting counter-arguments and refutations

Underline the expression(s) used to introduce the counter-argument and circle the expression(s) to present the refutation in the following paragraph.

City planners claim that there are options other than using the readily available country parks to increase land supply. Nevertheless, these options are entirely infeasible. Reclamation, creation of man-made islands or even development of underground homes may sound fabulous, yet they do not appear with a swing of a magic wand. Can we afford any more delays in providing for the numerous hopeless children and elderly now living in tiny cages and coffin-sized subdivided flats?

Think of other examples of expressions to introduce counter-arguments and refutations. Write them in the table below.

Introducing counter-arguments	Presenting refutations

Task 3 Examining an Argumentative Essay

In preparation for your own essay, you will study a winning essay of the writing competition last year and analyse its language features and structure.

Text 8 – An email from Ms Wong

To: jojowong@eless.edu.hk, lizawong@eless.edu.hk, billychong@eless.edu.hk

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Essay Writing Competition – Housing in Hong Kong

Dear all

I write to give you some help with the essay for the writing competition.

Last year, S4 students entered a writing competition organised by a youth service group called *Young Power* and wrote about consumer welfare and interest. I have attached for your reference the notice about the competition and a winning essay, which should give you some idea of the text features and organisation commonly adopted in argumentative writing. Feel free to approach me for more help.

Young Power Writing Competition

Background

The competition aims to enhance students' awareness of topical issues, encourage them to think critically and provide them with a good opportunity to improve their English skills.

Topic

Advertising is a billion-dollar industry which encourages consumption and economic growth. While some consumers appreciate the humour and originality of certain advertisements, they can have adverse effects on individuals and society. Write an essay of about 400 words discussing your views and explaining why advertising does more harm than good with examples. Give a title to your essay.

Prize

A full scholarship to participate in international youth exchange camps (three winners)

Points to note:

- Entrants must be under 18 on 31st July 2016.
- Deadline for receipt of entries: 12 noon, 31st July 2016

Regards

Ms Wong

Text 9 – An argumentative essay**Aggressive marketing in the media**

1 Advertising plays a pivotal role in the highly competitive marketplace. It enables consumers to know what is on offer and make more informed choices. However, many advertisements go to extremes and stir up controversy over
5 the impact on consumerism and consumer interests, which badly needs addressing.

(1)

Some advertisements for credit cards put emphasis on discount rates and free gifts to the cardholders. Others draw
10 our attention to limited promotional periods which drive us to impulsive purchase. In this connection it is not uncommon for us to become obsessed with buying products which may not be needed. Tons of raw materials are often wastefully exploited to cope with the ever-growing demand for
15 consumer goods. Worse still, excessive consumption is generally coupled with the rapid disposal of 'old' but usable products. A recent report published by Friends of the Earth painted an alarming picture: the disposal of e-waste has risen threefold over the past five years. Is our society ready to
20 handle such an enormous amount of waste? Thanks to heavy consumption, electronic gadgets, electrical appliances, clothes and all sorts of packaging materials being dumped add pressure to the overflowing landfills and exacerbate pollution.

(2)

25 You probably know quite a few who are hit hard by the absolutely skeletal figures in slimming advertisements and end up dieting furiously and exercising incessantly to stay thin. Their minds are thoroughly obsessed with artificial
30 images of perfectly-proportioned celebrities, presenting a twisted meaning of health and making them feel pressured into shedding weight. Obviously, if we are not made to

change our perception of beauty, how can marketers sell new products? The young audience are just as vulnerable to the narrow definition of beauty and health. A study conducted by the Hong Kong Eating Disorders Centre last year revealed that there was a marked increase in the number of teenagers who had tried losing weight while only 5 per cent were identified as being overweight. Similarly, most advertisements for beer associate the product with such desires as excitement, friendship and physical attractiveness. The crux of the issue is that these advertisements tend to appeal to the emotional needs of the audience. Simply put, it is the distorted values presented in the advertisements which are harmful to the audience.

Public pressure and government regulation are often said to have limited our exposure to seriously deadly things in advertisements. One may suggest that advertisements for cigarettes are banned and those promoting other unhealthy products are becoming a rarity. But is advertising really clear of anything harmful? From the day a child is first exposed to the outside world, they are surrounded with the overwhelming messages of the junk food industry. According to a recent research, the number of advertisements for sugary cereals, candies and fast food shown during weekend morning children's TV programmes has risen sharply. Not surprisingly, junk food marketers have not missed an even more direct channel to brainwash children. Nearly every major junk food product has its own website designed to appeal to children, with interactive games or animations featuring toys and cartoon characters. For a child to resist the soft sell is almost impossible.

(3)

In a free market exposure to advertising is beyond doubt inevitable. People of all ages should be sensitised to the need to critically evaluate the purpose and truthfulness of advertisements. It is through the heightened awareness of how they work that we can become informed and intelligent consumers.

Understanding the task requirement

1. The PRAFT strategy can help us better understand the reader-writer relationship and the use of language functions to achieve particular communicative purposes. Read *Text 8* and present a preliminary analysis of the writing task by completing the table below.

Purpose What is the writing for?	
Role of the writer What is the writer's role?	
Audience Who will be reading the writing?	
Format What is the text type for the writing?	
Topic Who or what is the subject of the writing?	

Identifying the writer's attitude

2. What is the writer's attitude towards advertising? Find clues in *Text 9* to support your answer.

Text organisation

3. Some sentences in *Text 9* are missing. Decide which of the following, if inserted into (1)-(3) in the text, can best complete the meaning of the paragraphs.

- A. While some advertisements deserve credit for the high degree of novelty, there are many others which spread problematic messages.
- B. Many studies have revealed that our landfills will be saturated very soon and it's time the government launched initiatives to cope with waste disposal in a sustainable manner.
- C. Despite the fact that advertising stimulates business and benefits economic growth, it indeed encourages wasteful consumption to such an extent that we as consumers are posing a threat to the environment.
- D. Who are in a better position than parents to guide children in making food choice?
- E. Slimming advertisements are certainly to blame for distorting the true meaning of health and beauty.
- F. Collectively, these advertisements which downplay nutritional value but stress fun and good taste definitely contribute to the mounting rate of obesity and accordingly the increased burden on medical care.

Put the correct letter (A-F) in the space provided.

(1): ____ (2): ____ (3): ____

4. What are the writer's intentions in the different paragraphs in *Text 9*? Are they in line with the overall purpose of the text?

Paragraph 1	<i>e.g. To highlight the adverse impact of advertising despite its role in helping consumers make informed decisions</i>
Paragraphs 2-3	
Paragraph 4	
Paragraph 5	

Language and Style

5. The writer uses a lot of strong words/phrases to appeal to reader's emotion and create a persuasive tone. Put them in the table below. One has been provided as an example.

Paragraph 2	e.g. <u>excessive</u> consumption\
Paragraph 3	
Paragraph 4	

6. Identify the counter-argument and refutation presented in *Text 9*.

7. (a) Read the following sentences taken from Paragraph 2 and discuss with your partners how they convince readers of the writer's point of view. Some clues have been underlined for you.

- (i) Despite the fact that advertising stimulates business and benefits economic growth, it indeed encourages wasteful consumption to such an extent that we as consumers are posing a threat to the environment.

- (ii) A recent report published by Friends of the Earth painted an alarming picture: the disposal of e-waste has risen threefold over the past five years.

- (iii) Is our society ready to handle such an enormous amount of waste?

- (iv) Thanks to heavy consumption, electronic gadgets, electrical appliances, clothes and all sorts of packaging materials being dumped add pressure to the overflowing landfills and exacerbate pollution.

- (b) Are the strategies above adopted in paragraphs 3 and 4? Identify relevant examples with your partners.

Task 4 Writing an Essay for the Competition

Situation: You and your classmates have decided to enter the writing competition organised by *Young Power*. Read the notice below and write your entry.

Young Power Writing Competition

Background

The competition aims to enhance students' awareness of topical issues, encourage them to think critically and provide them with a good opportunity to improve their English skills.

Topic

The poor living conditions of underprivileged families and the long wait for public rental housing have received considerable attention. In view of the city's housing problems, there is some discussion on the possibility of building houses on country park land. Write an essay of about 400 words discussing your views on utilising country park areas in residential development. Give a title to your essay.

Prize

A full scholarship to participate in international youth exchange camps (three winners)

Points to note:

- Entrants must be under 18 on 31st July 2017.
- Deadline for receipt of entries: 12 noon, 31st July 2017

Writing Plan

Purpose	
Role of the writer	
Audience	
Format	
Topic	

How should I categorise ideas into different paragraphs?

To achieve the purpose of the essay, what language structures or expressions should I use?

Peer Assessment Form

Date: _____

Task: *To argue for or against the following topic:*
“Developing country parks into residential areas does more good than harm to Hong Kong”

Text Type: *Argumentative essay*

Please tick: ✓	Needs Improvement	Meets some requirements	Satisfactory	Good	Well Done
A. Content					
1. Providing background information about the issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Presenting arguments from different perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Substantiating arguments with real-life examples, evidence and findings from authoritative sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Presenting counter-argument(s) and refutation(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Relating the issue to readers and encourage them to think deeply about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Providing an essay title in support of the writer's intention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Language and Style					
4. Using suitable vocabulary related to housing issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Using strong words/phrases to appeal to readers' emotion and create a more persuasive tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Using appropriate language items (e.g. intensifiers, rhetorical questions) to emphasise viewpoints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Organisation					
1. Five to six paragraphs, each with a clear focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Using appropriate topic sentences, supporting details and concluding sentences to create logical development of ideas in paragraphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Using appropriate cohesive devices for clearer signposting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Comments					

Teacher Assessment Form

Date: _____

Task: *To argue for or against the following topic:*

“Developing country parks into residential areas does more good than harm to Hong Kong”

Text Type: *Argumentative essay*

Please tick: ✓	Needs Improvement	Meets some requirements	Satisfactory	Good	Well Done
A. Content					
1. Providing background information about the issue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Presenting arguments from different perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Substantiating arguments with real-life examples, evidence and findings from authoritative sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Presenting counter-argument(s) and refutation(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Relating the issue to readers and encourage them to think deeply about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Providing an essay title in support of the writer's intention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Language and Style					
4. Using suitable vocabulary related to housing issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Using strong words/phrases to appeal to readers' emotion and create a more persuasive tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Using appropriate language items (e.g. intensifiers, rhetorical questions) to emphasise viewpoints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Organisation					
1. Five to six paragraphs, each with a clear focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Using appropriate topic sentences, supporting details and concluding sentences to create logical development of ideas in paragraphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Using appropriate cohesive devices for clearer signposting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Comments					

E. Student's Reflections

Taking into consideration the teacher's feedback and comments, I have identified some areas for further improvement and planned the follow-up actions:

Areas for improvement	Actions to be taken

I need to seek advice/assistance from my teacher on the following areas:
