**Assessment Task for Speaking**

**Topic: Music, Art and Education**

This assessment task focuses on developing senior secondary students’ speaking skills.

This set of materials consists of Question Paper and Suggested Answers.

**Speaking Task: Music, Art and Education**

**Part A Group Discussion**

The following letter has recently appeared in the newspaper.

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| Music, art and educationDear Sir, I strongly agree with the ideas in your editorial yesterday (May 5th, Creative Future) that the future success of Hong Kong depends on developing our creative industries. We need to prepare our young people for jobs in advertising, art, design, fashion, film, publishing and software development. However, we cannot do this without making subjects like music and art far more important at school. At present, if students are lucky, they may get a few lessons, but they do not receive proper courses to make sure all school leavers read music, can write a tune, play an instrument, draw a picture and talk intelligently about architecture and design. These skills won’t make everyone creative, but they are basic to developing people’s artistic side. Let’s take our future seriously and add plenty of music and art to the school curriculum.Stephanie So  |

Your teacher has asked your group to prepare a class presentation on the ideas expressed in the letter.

You may want to talk about:

* why creative industries and activities are important for great modern cities
* whether you have learned enough about music and art at school
* what problems you think the writer’s suggestion may face
* anything else you think is important

**Part B Individual Response**

1. How good at art are you?
2. Are you a musical person?
3. What part does music play in your life?
4. What sorts of musical activities take place in your school?
5. What sorts of musical and artistic events take place in Hong Kong?
6. What sorts of cultural and artistic events do you take part in?
7. Do you think your education has helped you to become more creative?
8. Can we be taught to be creative, or is it something we are born with?

**END OF QUESTION PAPER**

**Suggested Ideas for Group Interaction and Individual Response**

**Part A Group Interaction**

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| Importance of creative industries and activities  | * Hong Kong is no longer a manufacturing centre, and needs to develop high value-added industries.
* The Mainland manufactures lots of goods which can be improved with better design, packaging and advertising. The leisure and entertainment industries can be highly profitable. There is a constant demand for new computer games, software, apps, etc. These are opportunities we must not miss.
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| Sufficient musical and art education? | * Describe own experience.
* Many schools only offer a few lessons to junior classes, though there are extra-curricular activities.
* Not many schools put on high class exhibitions, plays or musical performances.
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| Problems with writer’s suggestion | * A crowded time-table- where would the lesson time come from?
* Strong academic tradition in Hong Kong schools
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| Anything else | * Cultural attitudes to the arts in Hong Kong
* The Academy for Performing Arts
* Competition from Shanghai
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**Part B Individual Responses**

1. How good at art are you?

*I’m afraid to say I am not very good. I like drawing and can do quite good copies of manga cartoon figures, but I have never had any training and there are many things I cannot draw at all well. It’s much the same for music. I can play a bit of guitar and my friends say I sing well when we go for some karaoke, but I cannot claim I have musical talent. Again, I have never had lessons of any sort. I enjoy taking photographs and have read some books on improving my pictures. I am pleased with some of the results. I like writing short stories, but I don’t let many people read them as I don’t think they are good. I would like to learn about Chinese opera, different styles of dance and the theatre, but there never seems to be time or opportunity. I hope I can become more artistic as I grow older.*

1. Are you a musical person?

*Yes, I would say I am. My father is very keen on music and has always encouraged the family to be active music lovers. I have been having piano lessons for the last ten years and have reached quite a high standard. My father plays the flute and my brother the violin, and the three of us do play together when we can. I have taken part in the musical life of my school, singing in the choir, playing the piano in morning assembly and being on the committee of the music club. I enjoy many types of music and have a large collection of CDs. My parents like to go to concerts- mainly western classical music, but also Chinese music- and I often go with them. Music is actually an important part of my life.*

1. What part does music play in your life?

*A big one. The first thing I do when I wake in the morning is turn on the radio and listen to the latest songs. When I am travelling anywhere I have my ear-phones on and am listening to my favourite tracks stored on my i-pod. When I talk to my friends we often talk about songs and singers. When we hear a song we like we often text each other about it. I suppose I spend about one third of my allowance on things relating to music. Sometimes I sing karaoke and occasionally go to concerts. It’s hard to say why music is so important, but it helps me deal with my emotions. Whether I am angry, happy, depressed or worried, there are songs which match my mood and help me understand it more. And when I feel tired and tense after a lot of work, lying on my bed listening to songs is the perfect way to relax. I couldn’t live without music.*

1. What sorts of musical activities take place in your school?

*Well, let me see. First, there is the school orchestra which performs at Speech Day and in some morning assemblies. And we have a brass band which plays at sports meets and events like that. And there’s a smaller string ensemble for some really good musicians. We have a music club which arranges tickets for concerts and introduces different types of music to members. There are lots of instrumental lessons available in school and S1 and S2 students are encouraged to take part. We have a music teacher and some classes have music lessons. Sometimes the music teacher stages a musical, but that’s a lot of work. Finally, the biggest musical event of the year for students is the song contest- there are lots of entries- solo singers, duets, bands, choral singing, and all sorts of performances. It’s great fun!*

1. What sorts of musical and artistic events take place in Hong Kong?

*A lot- I hardly know where to begin. Let’s talk about music. There are big concerts by Canto-pop stars and also by visiting bands from places like South Korea. And lots of small bands perform all the time in bars. We have a number of local orchestras who give concerts, and sometimes we have touring musicals like Phantom of the Opera here. And I must not forget Chinese opera performances. There are quite a few film festivals every year with lots of opportunities to see films from all around the world. I don’t know much about theatre but I know there are a few companies and there are plenty of plays for people to go to see. We have a few museums and sometimes, but I don’t think very often, there are things like paintings by great artists brought in to Hong Kong from overseas. Oh, and there’s ballet and other types of dance to be seen.*

1. What sorts of cultural and artistic events do you take part in?

*I am keen on drama. My school is quite strong in this area too. We always enter the inter-school drama competition and often do well so I have had plenty of opportunities to help behind scenes and also to act. I have also been very active in our school drama society. Lucky enough, our school is offering drama as one of the elective modules so I can have drama during my English lessons too. When I have the opportunity I also go to see plays in the theatre. I’m also interested in calligraphy. I used to take lessons. I have an aunt who is very interested in the art. I don’t do much now, but I go with her to any exhibitions and we talk about the writing we see. I like cinema and have learned quite a lot about it while doing English Literature at school. I borrow a lot of DVDs and go to see films friends recommend. I think I am quite cultured- well, I hope so.*

1. Do you think your education has helped you to become more creative?

*I’m not sure it has. It has certainly taught me many things. Going to school every day, attending lessons, doing homework and so on has made me a disciplined person who can work independently. I have also obtained a lot of knowledge about many things, and perhaps more importantly learned many skills- such as study skills so I can find new information, language skills so I can express myself and communicate with others, and logical thinking so I can organise my thoughts and avoid confusion. My education has also helped me develop my morality so I know what is right and wrong and try to keep to the former. But has it helped me to be creative? I am not sure it has. I cannot design anything and my imagination is not very good. I can’t produce stories or poems. I don’t think my ideas are very original. Perhaps I will learn that at university if I am lucky enough to get a place.*

1. Can we be taught to be creative, or is it something we are born with?

*I haven’t really thought about this before. Maybe if you went to a school where you spent a lot of time reading imaginative books, writing poetry, being shown all sorts of different modern paintings and designs you’d end up a more creative person than if you follow a more ordinary curriculum. I think a lot about us comes from our genes. Some people are naturally better at maths or languages or at being logical or creative. But education can prepare you to use your talent. If you never learn to read and play music, draw, become familiar with good stories and novels, or understand how colours work together and so on, even if you are creative you won’t be able to make much use of your gift. Education should try to make the most of everyone’s different talents and prepare them to use them – it should not offer one route for all.*

**END OF SUGGESTED ANSWERS**