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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1¹

(Suggested Time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Introduction

The *World Wide Web*, created in 1989, became a household staple throughout the mid-to-late 90's and early 2000's. Today, approximately 60% of individuals around the world have consistent access to it. Upon its creation, the technology itself had many recognizing the global benefit of such an innovation: greater togetherness. The internet, particularly through popular social media and gaming platforms, has the ability to connect individuals from all over the world, making it just a bit “smaller.” And yet, this contemporary interconnectedness is not without its dangers. Between the “dark web”—a cesspool of fraud and cybercriminal activity—and international governments' reliance on communicating (and often propagating) information through the technology, there is little doubt that the internet is not necessarily the most ideal tool to usher in a greater sense of communal globalism.

Assignment

Carefully read the following 8 sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on *the global influence of the internet*.

Directions:

Make sure that your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.²

Source A (MacLean)

Source B (Insert Parenthetical)

Source C (Insert Parenthetical)

Source D (Insert Parenthetical)

Source E (Insert Parenthetical)

Source F (Insert Parenthetical)

Source G (Insert Parenthetical)

Source H (Insert Parenthetical)

When curating your other sources, note that source diversity is key. This is true for media, ethnicity, and thought. You must have at least two visual sources: one must be quantitative, the other must be qualitative. You must have at least one source created by a male, one created by a female, and one created by an organization. One source must be created by a cultural/ethnic minority, and at least two sources must clearly oppose one another. Any one source may fit more than one of the categories mentioned above.

¹ Modified from an original version produced by Meghan Hobbs Chandler

² This language is taken from past versions and variations of the College Board's question 1 synthesis prompt
www.collegeboard.org

Source A

MACLEAN, RORY. *PRAVDA HA HA: True Travels to the End of Europe*. BLOOMSBURY, 2020.

The following is an excerpt from a book written by an international travel author.

‘Cyber weapons can affect a huge amount of people as can nuclear weapons,’ General Vladislav Sherstyuk, a member of Russia’s National Security Council, told the MIT Technology Review. ‘But there is one big difference between them. Cyber weapons are very cheap. Almost free of charge.’

For the last decade the so-called Internet Research Agency has waged war on democracy, by hacking our emotions. On Facebook and Twitter its operatives propagate whopping lies: linking pornography to Russian opposition politicians on VKontakte, slamming liberals on Breitbart comments, championing Brexit on Daily Mail Online. Bots, short for robots, then forward these "personal" comments to countless fake accounts, making them trend by manipulating Google's algorithms.

The Agency's success has been breath-taking. During the 2016 US presidential election, its 80,000 Facebook posts, replete with inflammatory images, were seen by 126 million Americans. On the day of the Brexit Referendum, 3,800 fake accounts were mobilised to tweet the hashtag #ReasonsToLeaveEU: Migrants rape thirteen-year-old Russian girl in Berlin! (Lie) EU to ban baptism! (Lie) Florida school shooter shouts Arabic phrases before killing spree! (Untrue) We can hardly imagine what they are posting now – ahead of November – but we do know that their every tweet, meme, video and deepfake photograph has been designed to sow distrust, to exacerbate division and to discredit truth.

“In 2007 Moscow began to flex its cyber muscles by attacking Putin’s least favourite Baltic state, crashing Estonia’s national computer network. A few months later its hackers broke into Georgian government websites to manipulate public opinion during the Russian-Georgian war. In 2014 similar attacks were launched before the seizure of Crimea. Next, in 2015, Russian hackers shut down Ukraine’s power grid and France’s TV5Monde. In the same year an assault on the Bundestag – so stealthy that it went undetected for six months – succeeded in ‘comprehensive strategic data gathering’ according to the German intelligence agency. Another foreign cyber attack – similar to the first Estonian DDoS (distributed denial of service) offensive – is believed to have caused the collapse of the British government’s voter registration website in the run-up to the 2016 EU Brexit referendum, thereby disenfranchising tens of thousands of people. In the same year seasoned operatives from the GRU – the armed forces’ military intelligence agency – hacked the US presidential election, penetrating both Democratic and Republican Party computer networks, weaponising data and pinpointing infrastructure vulnerabilities ‘for use at a later date’, reported the Senate Intelligence Committee. Russia also secreted malware into the Twitter accounts of more than 10,000 Pentagon employees. One click – to an intriguing sports story or kitten lover’s website – allowed the hackers to take control of the victim’s account, as well as his or her mobile phone and computer.

The Agency’s success was breathtaking (despite the occasional tell-tale grammatical error like ‘Rabid Squirrels Is Terrorising Florida’). Heart of Texas – just one of its thousands of fake accounts – garnered a quarter of a million followers (and almost started a riot outside Houston’s Islamic Da’wah Center). Its YouTube videos and Instagram messages have reached more than twenty million people. Its 80,000 Facebook posts, replete with inflammatory images, were seen by 126 million Americans during the presidential election.”

Source B

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Source C

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Source D

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Source E

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Source F

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Source G

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Source H

[Insert Italicized context that will allow the reader to more fully understand the excerpt.]

Question 2

(Suggested Time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

The following is written by Canadian author Rory MacLean. In this passage he reflects on London as a way to consider both his past international travels while also acknowledging the present state of humanity, particularly in Europe. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices MacLean makes to achieve his purpose of moving individuals to be more empathetic toward others.

“London – dirty, thriving, patched-together London – had long been the centre of my world. Years ago I was drawn to it by its history and openness. I walked its streets by day, collar turned against the winter rain, listening and looking, enthralled by its unfolding story. I loved the city at night: the empty avenues, the clutching couples, the smell of autumn leaves, a single office light glowing on Whitehall. In summer I lay on the grass in Holland Park – never in a pay-for deckchair – or sat under a catalpa tree watching Wimbledon, the television’s extension lead snaking out from my flat. I felt myself at home in the British Library and Canada House. I made movies at Shepperton and Pinewood. I cycled to work at the World Service and Goethe-Institut. I met my wife in SW10. David Bowie invited me to Dingwalls. Now when I return, I retrace the old paths and remember the conversations that I’d had along them, reviving them and the countless other voices that I hear suspended in the ether, above Piccadilly and Soho, on Chelsea Bridge and Highgate Hill, in a dozen languages and at a thousand points from Green Lanes to the Pimlico Tandoori.

After lunch I caught the number 9 bus to Kensington Gardens to stroll beneath the plane trees on Lancaster Walk. On that sunny afternoon I circled the Round Pond and paused for breath under the sweet chestnuts on South Flower Walk. Around me idled Spanish students and Australian au pairs, Kuwaiti non-doms and tight-knit bands of Chinese tourists. Russians – so many Russians – pushed prams, walked dogs and looked over their shoulders before waiting Mercedes-Maybachs whisked them back to Harrods. Nearby, along the Long Water, Southwark Park school kids ate packed sandwiches after their visit to the V&A. SOAS and Alliance Française language teachers sat together on the steps of the Albert Memorial. American expats played softball across West Carriage Drive while a Polish mothers’ group practised t’ai chi alongside the Rotten Row bridgeway. Their London – our London – felt closer to New York than Newcastle, more like Paris than Preston. For beneath the continent, tectonic plates had shifted, twisting both it and Europe away from England.

Thirty years ago Europe became whole again. I wrote then that the Wall, the late great division of the world, had passed away as an historical aberration. In Berlin, Prague and Moscow I’d danced with so many others on the grave of dictatorships, in an act of defiance, in a celebration of the resilience of the human spirit. I convinced myself that our generation was an exception in history, that we’d learned to live by different rules, that we were bound together by freedom. I believed that the horrors of the twentieth century – the traumas of which had driven me to become a writer – could never return.

I’ve remade this journey – backwards – to try to understand how it went wrong. I’ve tried to catch a snapshot of ordinary people living in an extraordinary time, in fear in St Petersburg and Donbas, with courage in Tallinn and Warsaw. I’ve seen how Vladimir Putin capitalised on a series of terror attacks – real, dubious or fake – to muscle himself into total power, bringing to my mind the Nazis’ seizure of control of Germany. I’ve watched him grab parts of a neighbouring country with an audacity unseen in Europe since the days of Stalin and Hitler. I’ve understood why he ordered his Sukhoi Su-34 fighters to bomb Syria.

In Germany the flood of refugees – even though now much reduced – has roused extremists. Populists have taken Poland and Hungary by demonising illusory enemies who threatened the ‘purity of the nation’. Finally at home, I’ve witnessed another insular elite – in their quest for power, in their bigotry, with or without *pipiska putina* – exploit public grievances, mutilate truth and try to hijack democracy.

Under the lime trees, with my notebook open, the emotion took me by surprise, so much so that my eyes stung. For many years I have travelled and lived with certain principles, prizing certain values, with a firm and unwavering belief in the promise of the future. Now I realise it’s us who must fulfil that promise. We kid ourselves if we believe that one day the tectonic plates will simply shift again, that in time the demagogues and xenophobes will retire to Foros, Key West or Clacton-on-Sea, that we need to do nothing. History does not move in repeating cycles; rather it shows us patterns and trends. Change is life, on that at least Jenny and I could agree. Either we shape the future or we sleepwalk into it.

Europe and Britain need a new story, a true story. Perhaps it’s here that it will begin, rather than end. I want to believe that Londoners won’t be told what to do or how to live, that they’ll never accept a stifled media or a single version of reality. Perhaps this open, patched-together capital can show us how to respect rather than scorn our neighbours, can help us to abandon divisive nativist notions as well as grand fancies of empire or a harmonious superstate. Perhaps London – in its diversity and untidiness, in its dissonance – can illuminate for the whole continent (including this island on the edge) how to stop being slaves to illusions.

Where then is the real end of Europe? I once thought it to be a physical place, perhaps the line of the River Oder or the Urals. I realise now that it is not a freak of geography and far more a question of culture and morality, a matter of principles. It’s the point where antique forms of identity clash with modernity, where tolerance, decency and a certain way of thinking end, where openness meets a wall.”

Question 3

(Suggested Time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

Consider the following lines written about history:

“We are not makers of history. We are made by history.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an American civil rights leader

“A generation which ignores history has no past and no future.”

-Robert Heinlein, an American science fiction author.

“History does not move in repeating cycles; rather it shows us patterns and trends.”

-Rory MacLean, a Canadian novelist and travel author.

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

- Maya Angelou, an American poet and activist

Write an essay that argues your position on how history influences the ways in which individuals live their lives in the present.

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