



Cambridge International AS & A Level

THINKING SKILLS

9694/21

Paper 2 Critical Thinking

October/November 2025

1 hour 45 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

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

INFORMATION

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

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

Section A

Study the evidence and then answer Questions 1 and 2.

Source A**Website of homeopathy association**

Homeopathy is a method of treating illness and disease. It works on a 'like cures like' basis, using the principle that symptoms can be removed using tiny doses of a substance that causes similar symptoms. These substances are heavily diluted in water and shaken – a process known as 'succussion'. To give a very simple example, onion can make people's eyes water, so, in suitable microscopic doses, it is sometimes used to treat allergies.

However, homeopathy can do much more than merely remove symptoms. It looks at each patient in a holistic way, by going beyond the symptoms to treat the underlying causes, and, in general, by stimulating the body's natural healing powers to restore full health and well-being.

Homeopathic medicine has a proven track record of successfully treating short-term and chronic conditions in both adults and children.

Source B**Blog by medical doctor**

I began my medical career, 35 years ago, working (for five years) in a homeopathic hospital, and initially had no doubts at all about how useful homeopathy can be. The results seemed impressive, with many patients making great improvements after several treatments.

However, over time and with reflection on the alleged science behind homeopathy, I started to have doubts. First of all, neither the 'like cures like' principle nor succussion is consistent with current scientific knowledge. Secondly, I realised we cannot simply assume that, because the treatments were followed by healing, the first caused the second – a tempting but unsafe inference. There are other possibilities. The most plausible of these is that if a patient has great trust in homeopathy, the mere fact of having received treatment may itself have caused the improvement. The medicine may have had no effect in bringing this about. In other words, such cures may be a reaction to a placebo.

Source C**Government website from country A**

Scientific reviews of the effectiveness of homeopathy have generally concluded that there is no evidence that it is as effective as conventional medicine in treating health conditions. Nor is there any evidence supporting the ideas that (a) substances that cause particular symptoms may be used to treat conditions with similar symptoms, or (b) diluting and shaking these substances can turn them into medicines. Indeed, these basic principles of homeopathic medicine are not consistent with the findings of mainstream science.

Homeopathic treatments are normally safe to use, and there is only a small risk that they will cause serious side-effects or interfere with the action of already prescribed medicines. However, if people wish to consult a homeopathist, they are strongly advised to discuss this beforehand with their regular doctor, especially if they are already taking any prescription medication.

Source D

Government website from country B

- *How effective is homeopathy?*
There's little evidence that homeopathy is an effective treatment for any specific health condition.
- *Are homeopathic products safe?*
Products labelled as homeopathic may contain substantial amounts of substances which could cause side-effects or interfere with other medicines.

Source E

Article on health information website

When carrying out an evidence-based research trial, people are expected to do two things: (1) to register in a public research record any trials that they propose to carry out before these trials start; (2) publish the results when the trial has been completed. These are not legal requirements, but are seen as markers of openness and good practice. A recent study has examined the working of research trials over the last 20 years that have investigated the effectiveness of homeopathy. This study found the following facts.

- 38% of registered homeopathy trials have never had their results published.
- More trials were registered after publication than before the research began.

- 1 (a) Is the first paragraph of Source A an argument? Justify your answer. [2]
- (b) Other than the placebo effect, suggest **two alternative** explanations for the recovery of the patients mentioned in Source B. [2]
- (c) Assess the reliability of Source B. [4]
- (d) How consistent with each other are Sources C and D? [4]
- (e) After reading Source E, a student said, 'The research trials were biased.'
Explain how the evidence in Source E supports this claim. [2]

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

'Homeopathy is of no medical value.'

To what extent do you agree with this claim? Write a short, reasoned argument to support your conclusion, using and evaluating the evidence provided. [8]

Section B

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

- 1 Environmental activism takes many forms nowadays. One of its most widely stated aims is to encourage us to change our behaviour to ensure that the world is habitable for our descendants, the people of the future. However, we have no obligation to future people, since we should only consider the needs of people to whom we have a responsibility.
- 2 We cannot have obligations to people who may never exist. The future is unknown to us. Some scientists even claim that our species may become extinct in only a few decades. So we cannot be sure that future people will ever exist. Even if there will be people in the future, we cannot be sure of what will actually benefit them. Trying to make decisions that will benefit future generations would be like driving a car with your eyes closed.
- 3 Many people do not have enough food, clothing, or proper shelter. So the current population of the world still has basic needs that are not being met. Globally, we have the resources to solve these urgent problems. A present need is more urgent than a future one. Therefore, we should focus on meeting the needs of existing people.
- 4 The world is affected by pollution, vanishing natural resources, overpopulation, and other urgent problems. For at least a century, people have been relying on fossil fuels and harmful chemicals, and deforesting large parts of the globe. So these problems have mainly been caused by the activities of previous generations. As many environmentalists claim, our behaviour is making these problems worse. However, previous generations clearly did not consider the needs of future people – in this case, us – so neither should we.
- 5 It is tempting to state that previous generations were unaware of the harm they were doing, but we should avoid making this claim. Environmental experts were fully aware that serious problems would eventually arise from our careless treatment of the world in which we live.

- 3 (a) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify the *main conclusion*. [2]
- (b) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify **two intermediate conclusions** from paragraphs 1 to 3. [4]
- (c) Using the exact words from the passage as far as possible, identify **one counter-assertion**. [2]
- (d) Identify the *argument element* and explain the function of the following words from paragraph 5:

‘we should avoid making this claim’ [2]

- 4 (a) Identify and evaluate an *appeal* in paragraph 2. [3]
- (b) Identify and evaluate an *analogy* in paragraph 2. [3]
- (c) Identify and explain a flaw of *conflation* in paragraph 5. [2]
- (d) Identify and explain **one** flaw or weakness in the reasoning in paragraph 4. [2]

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

‘Human beings should put their own needs above those of all other species.’

Write your own short argument to support **or** challenge this claim. The conclusion of your argument must be stated. Credit will not be given for repeating ideas from the passage. [8]

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