



**I6 + Examination**  
**SAMPLE PAPER**

**Essay question**

*Read the two passages and then answer ONE of the essay questions on lined paper (answer sheet).*

*You can engage with the supplementary reading as much or as little as you like in your essay, as long as you are engaging with the key concerns of the question. You can use your personal experience to inform your response if you wish.*

*You should aim to spend around 10 minutes planning.*

*You may write notes on this exam paper.*

**Please remember to write your name at the top of your answer sheet.**

Consider this passage and answer **either question A or B** on the next page.

## **Now we know for sure that big tech peddles despair, we must protect ourselves**

**Zoe Williams**

### **There can be no doubt about the risk or urgency: our anger must be put to good use**

Social media platforms deliberately target users with content, seeking attention and therefore advertising revenue: we knew that. This content can be extremely damaging: we knew that, too.

But surely now that we've struggled, falteringly, towards the conclusion that it can be deadly, there can be no more complacency. These are corporations like any other, and it's time to build on the consensus that they cause harm by regulating, as we would if they were producing toxic waste and pumping it into paddling pools.

People, parents especially, worry a lot about the digital age and its impact on teenagers, and a lot of those worries are nonsense: are they addicted to Fifa? Will Minecraft turn them into recluses or sever their connection with the natural world? Does Fortnite stop them reading books (in fact, yes, but some other time for that)?

Underneath all that noise is a persistent drumbeat, an agenda now well known, pursued by methods that have been widely studied. Any platform that is free to use exists to maximise its advertising revenue, which means chasing watchers and watch-time. The algorithms suggesting content are not designed to prioritise quality or relevance, but rather to take an existing interest in any given user and attack them directly.

There are two elements that make social media particularly influential on the young, and the behemoths of the field particularly culpable in their failure to address the problem. As Laura Bates, researcher, notes, "the social media coverage of Gen Z is astronomical: 85% of US teens use YouTube, 72% use Instagram, 51% still use Facebook. People spend significantly more time watching content that's been recommended than stuff they've gone looking for: on YouTube, 70% of everything watched has been suggested by the site."

Adolescence is also, manifestly, a time of great intellectual as well as neurological plasticity, when you might easily want to know what a chiropodist is without wanting to become one, or feel very keenly that the world is doomed one day, without being ready for your entire feed to be about variations of the apocalypse. We allow the main media consumed by that generation to operate, not just without any sense of responsibility or duty, but with a business model that foments every problem for profit.

An air of pre-emptive defeatism hangs over this debate: a sense that it is too late to regulate social media, that the lie has travelled all the way round the world, and there is now no point in the truth getting its pants on. But that is a counsel of despair. We cannot afford despair.

But at the same time, the solution is not individual. The answer is to build a consensus, which is as global as the platforms themselves, that some things are more important than profit, and regulate accordingly.

From: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/oct/07/big-tech-despair-protect-ourselves-molly-russell-anger>

Using the extract above to help shape and inspire your own ideas, answer one of the following questions:

**A) Is social media, overall, a force for good?**

**OR**

**B) 'Social media should be regulated' Do you agree? Explain your answer.**

**Please remember to write your name clearly at the top of your answer sheet.**